

The content contenders fight it out

internet magazine

THE FRESH AND FRUITY ISSUE

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the Net will
change your
job market
for ever

Exclusive
ISP tests

UK WEB SITE OF THE YEAR

The winner's full
incredible story
PLUS THE

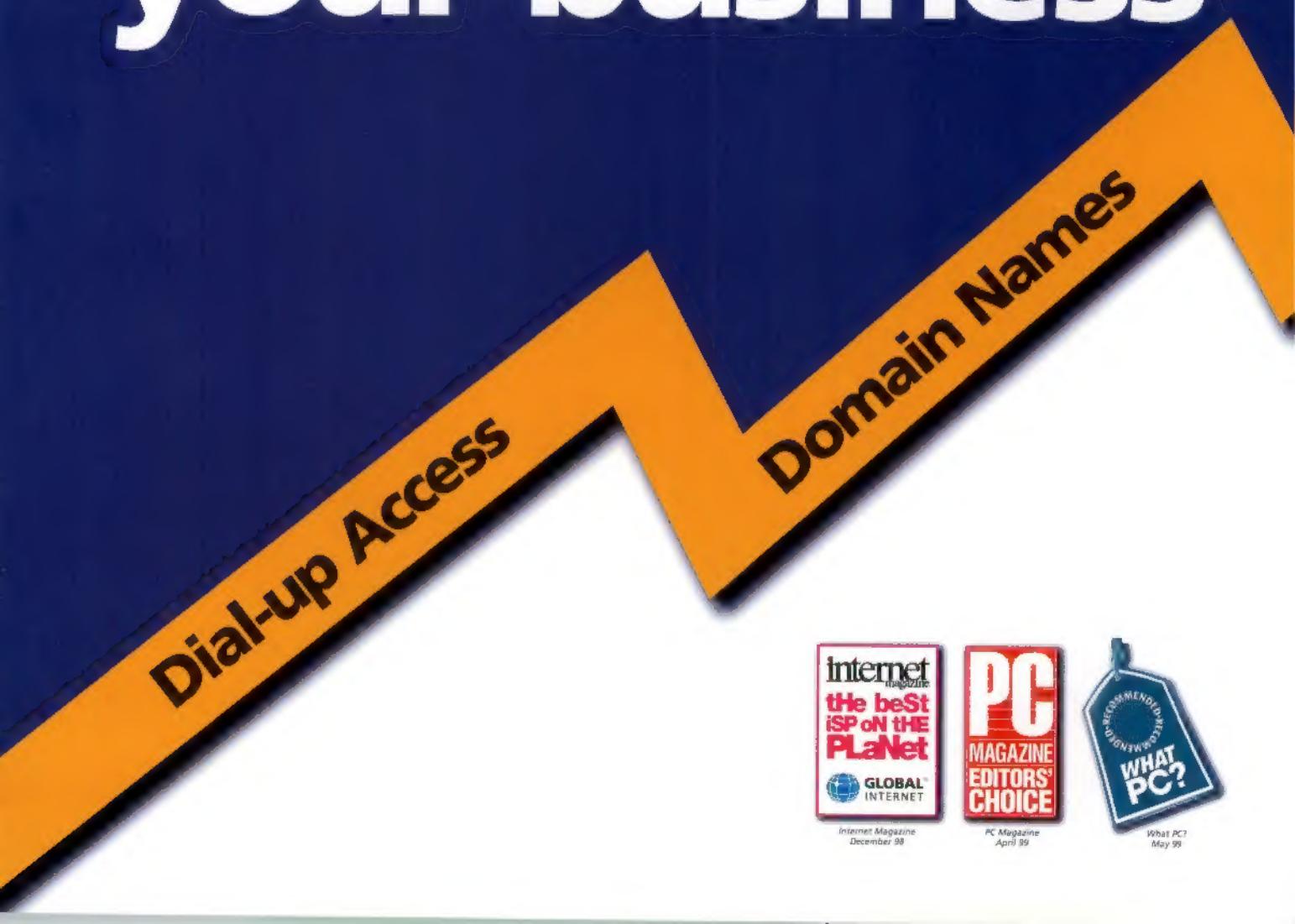
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Dial-up Access

Domain Names



Internet Magazine
December 98



PC Magazine
April 99



What PC?
May 99

Hosting Webspace

For the serious home user or small business, choosing an ISP is a decision that requires forward thinking.

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www.subscriptions.co.uk
(01858) 438 825
8am to 9.30pm weekdays,
8am to 4pm Saturday
10am to 4pm Sunday
Fax: (01858) 434 958 (24 hours)
Print and digital repro **Cradley Print**
Warley, West Midlands B64 6AB
News trade distribution **Lorraine Russell, Frontline** (01733) 555 161



©1999 Emap Active Ltd
ISSN 1355-6428

Subscription rates

Annual subscription rates: £37.20 UK; £44.75 airmail to Europe; £39.35 Eire; £64.99 airmail to US and Canada; £67.49 airmail to rest of world. Subscriptions Hotline: (01858) 435 338 Fax: (01858) 435 958 Or write to Internet Subscriptions, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 9EF

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Audited average monthly circulation: 50,014 (JULY-DEC 1998)

Free spirit

This is one hell of a time to be the editor of a magazine about the Internet. The issues we write about are so important and the repercussions of the stories we report are far-reaching. So what's the burning issue right now? Free access? Free calls? Free speech?

The answer is yes to all three. Personally, I think free access is a poisoned chalice. Readers have written to me with stories of deteriorating services following the massive rise in new subscribers to the so-called free ISPs.

The ISP software you've installed has done some unspeakable things to your computers and premium rate helplines have been little or no help at all – the list goes on and will be expanded upon in next month's main feature (on sale 24 August).

Freeserve will probably be interested in what we have to say, but we'll be the least of its worries. There have been some important developments that could change the direction of the market once again. The notion of AOL (the world's largest ISP) going free must have shareholders shuffling uncomfortably (see page 11). AOL plays on the world stage and could easily take on several million more subscribers by introducing a free service. Will it be able to maintain its content and support quality?

We need free calls to encourage Net use and stimulate the growth of e-commerce (see page 11). I'd be more than happy to pay a monthly fee if I knew all my calls were going to be free. Call charges are the home user's greatest fear, and I think some free ISPs keep us connected for longer than we need to be. When was the last time you checked to see if your connection timed out when it was left idle? If you could pay a tenner a month and get free calls, your computer could be moved into the middle of your living space, left on, and hooked up all weekend. Wouldn't that be great?

As for free speech, our service providers are going to be a bit nervous about the contents of your Web pages and emails until the Demon v Dr Lawrence Godfrey defamation case is finally resolved (see page 17). Demon intends to appeal against a pre-trial ruling that accuses the ISP of being responsible for defamatory comments made about Dr Lawrence which were held on its servers.



You must be careful what you say as well – publishing on the Net is more powerful than any paper medium. But you think that's bad – this is the third column I've written this month. The first two were spiked for legal reasons!

Martyn Moore
Editor

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- Check weather, travel conditions and timetables before you leave **GO AAROADWATCH**

- Shop and bank from home and the office 24 hours a day **GO SHOPPING**

- Book flights, hotels and last-minute holiday deals **GO TRAVEL**

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- See what's on locally and find the best restaurants and pubs **GO LEISURE**



Disclaimer

Please note: manufacturers will not support demo software and you install these programs on your machine at your own risk. We have tested them for viruses and corruption, and at time of shipping these are all checked out fine.

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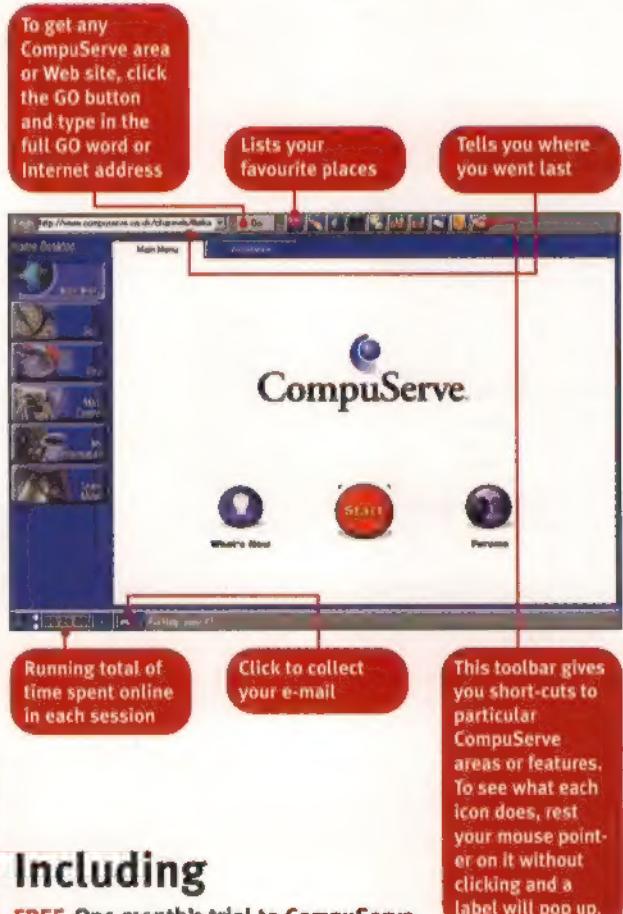
You'll find most of the software on this CD is shareware. Shareware developers put in a lot of work for little return and you should register software you continue to use after the evaluation period. Charges for shareware are usually very modest and registration entitles you to customer support and free or cheap upgrades.

Using your CD

The interface for the CD is written in HTML, which means you can open it in any browser. Just open up your browser, select the File Open option, access your CD drive and then load up the file index.htm.

If you don't have a browser, fear not. We've thoughtfully included the latest versions of Netscape Communicator and Internet Explorer on the CD for Windows 9.x/NT4 and the Mac. You'll find them in the Browser section on your CD.

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For your toolkit

Adobe Acrobat Reader *New version* (W9x/Mac)
NetInfo Diagnostic utilities (W9x/NT)
Essential NetTools Network tools (W9x/NT)
RamBooster Optimise your RAM (W9x/NT)
WinBoost 98 Personalise system settings (Win98)
Ativa DUN Meter Enhance your time online (W9x)
DrNet32 Anti-virus plug-in (W9x/NT)
CoffeeCup DirectFTP *New version* FTP client (W9x/NT)
Phone Monitor Track your time online (W9x)
Tardis 2000 v1 (W9x) Tardis v3 (W3.x), Tardis 2000 v1 (NT) Make sure your clock's right
TopDog Site positioning and ranking app (W9x)
WinZip v7.0 *Evaluation version* (W9x/NT4)
WinZip v6.3 *Evaluation version* (W3.x)
FileHound Looks after your downloads (W9x)
FPArchie Seeks the files you're after (W9x)
DirectX 6.1 *Latest version* Multimedia extensions (Win 95)
Vbrun Visual Basic runtime libraries (Win 95)
Stuffit Expander Archive unpacker (Mac)
Analog Analyse Web server log files (Mac)
WebbToys Get more done online (Mac)
OT/PPP Strip Control strip add-on (Mac)
Anarchie Pro *New version* FTP tool (Mac)
Mac OS Runtime for Java Run Java applications and applets (Mac)
Link Checkerv Clears out dead links (Mac)
TechTool Smarten up your Mac (Mac)
FreePPP Connection tool (Mac)
Download Deputy Set up batch downloads (Mac)
Fetch Well-known file retriever... good dog! (Mac)

Great Graphics

CyberView Image *Latest version* JPEG compression software (W9x)
Smart Pix Manager *New version* Manage your image files (W9x) **Panopticum Lens Pro** PhotoShop plug-in (W9x/NT/Mac)
IrfanView *New version* Image viewer (W9x/NT)
ArtistScope Secure Image Source Protect your images (W9x/NT)
ProjPEG Optimise your JPEGs (W9x/Mac)
Xara 3D Produce quality 3D images (W9x/NT)
GIF Animator *25 day trial* GIF animation program (W9x/NT4)
EyeDropper Sort out your colours (W9x)
Paint Shop Pro v5 Challenge to Photoshop (Win 95)
Paint Shop Pro v3.11 Great graphics editor (Win 3.x)
IView View and organise all your image files (Mac)
Graphic Converter *Latest version* Does exactly what it says on the tin (Mac)
WebPainter Vector and bitmap animation tool (Mac)
PhotoGIF Create and edit GIF files (Mac)
Graphics Plug-Ins/Filters Photoshop Dither Filters and MediaSpark Filters (Mac)

Email

Horizons Stationery for Outlook Express (W9x)
Spam Solution Stop spammers from harvesting your pages (W9x)
Pegasus Mail Free email client (W9x/3.x)
SpamEater Pro *New version* Fight spam (W9x/NT)
Deadletter *Demo version* Anti-spam plug-in (W9x/NT)
Spam Bait Creator Get back at spammers (W9x)
Eudora Spell Checker Tidy up your email (W9x/3.x)
Eudora Light Cut down version of email client (W9x/3.x/Mac)
Email Merge *New version* Create mailings (Mac)

Web site building

Dutch's HTML Editor Pro *15 day trial* Editor to suit pros and novices (W9x/NT)
ACE Expert *New version* Powerful site builder (W9x/NT)
Scribbler 98 JavaScript, VBScript and DHTML editor (W9x/NT)
TextTone Smooth gradients for your pages (W9x/NT)
Kimiko HTML editor for hand-coders (W9x/NT)
PreHTML HTML pre-processor (W9x/NT)
CoffeeCup HTML Editor *New version* (W9x/NT)
Cryonics Flash Create 3D Web sites (W9x)
Actinic Catalog *30-day evaluation* Create online sales catalogues (Win9x)
CatKing Catalogue software for small businesses (W9x)
Style Master *New version* Style sheet app (W9x/NT)
QDCat Create catalogues and order systems (W9x)
Splash!1 Design pages without coding (W9x)
Frame-it Generate HTML frames (W3.x/W9x)
SmartScript Simple JavaScript tool (W9x)
SurfMap JavaScript Visual authoring tool (W9x)
1st Java Navigator Manage system navigation (W9x)
Smart Site Site analysis and maintenance tool (W9x)
WebScripter HTML/javaScript editor (W9x)
Applet Widget Kit Create Java applets easily (W9x)
Browserola Shows how browsers see your site (W9x)
Web Gateway 98 Powerful Web page wizard (W9x/NT)
Button Generator *Evaluation version* Generates image files for captioned buttons (W9x)
Pretty HTML HTML source code styling tool (W9x/NT)



Merac ImageMap Generator Create navigation images (W9x)
HomeSite *Evaluation version* Award-winning HTML design tool (W9x/NT4)
SiteExplorer Pro Display the contents and structure of your site offline (W9x/NT)
Hot Wax Pro Add JavaScript enhancements (W9x/NT4)
Style Master *New version* Control style sheets (Mac)
VSE HTML Turbo *121-day trial version*, updated (Mac)
Dreamweaver *Trial version* Professional Web development tool (Mac)
Freeway *30-day trial* Create stunning Web sites (Mac)
HexWeb Typograph (BBEdit ext) *Demo version* (Mac)
BBEdit v4.5 *Demo version* Classic HTML editor (Mac)
BBEdit Lite v4.1 Full Lite version (Mac)
GoLive CyberStudio *Demo version* We used it to build our site (Mac)

HTML Editor Straightforward HTML editor (Mac)
MapEdit Create image maps of your pages (Mac)

Browsers

SurfSaver Save pages from the Web (W9x/NT)
Copernic 99 Advanced Net search utility (W9x/NT)
Powermarks Organise all your bookmarks (W9x/NT)
SpinnerPlus Free Internet music player (W9x/NT)
Retrieva Retrieve sites for offline browsing (W9x/NT)
Browser Cache Switch Make multiple caches (W9x/NT)
Internet Explorer v5 Final release version (Win 9x/NT4)
MicroSurfer Web tool to speed up surfing (W9x)
WebZip Download, store and view sites offline (W9x)
Webcelerator Web accelerator with knobs on (W9x)
Netscape Communicator v4.5 (Win 9x/Mac)
Web Devil Download sites, images and links for offline browsing (Mac)
iRemember Keep track of where you've been (Mac)
Sherlock *Updated version* Search your computer and the Net (Mac)
Internet Explorer v4.5 (Mac)
URL Manager Pro Use bookmarks in all browsers (Mac)
CyberViewer Tracks your Netscape session (Mac)

Bits 'n' Pieces

dtSearch Web Powerful text retrieval app (W9x/NT4)
Register Pro Promotion Spider Submit site information to hundreds of search engines (W9x/NT)
SETI@Home Search for extraterrestrial life (W9x/Mac)
Namelys Find a name for your site (W9x)
Gravity *Limited demo* of this news reader (W9x)
TiFNY *Limited demo* Another news reader (W9x)
XNews Free news reader (W9x/NT)
Digiguide *New version* Free offline TV guide (W9x)
Aquatica Screensaver Fish for your screen (W9x)
VSE Be Found Submit your site to the most popular search engines (Mac)
Birthdays and Such *New version* Popular daily reminder program (Mac)
GoMac Makes it easier for Windows users (Mac)

Multimedia

n-Track Studio Multi-track WAV and MIDI recorder and mixer (W9x/NT)
AVI Constructor Pack *Trial version* Create AVI movies (W9x/NT)
ChilliCAM Grab images from video cards (W9x/NT)
Webcam2 Display camera images (W9x/NT)
Music Maker Pro Create multimedia files (W9x/NT)
SHOUTCast Server Broadcast from your site (W9x/NT)
WinAmp *New version* MPEG player and more (W9x)
Audio Grabber Copy music from CDs (W9x)
MP3 Strip It All in one MP3 solution (W9x)
Planet.MP3Find Search MP3 servers (W9x)
Headcase Player Add pictures to your streaming sound files (W9x)
Stream Anywhere Produce streaming content (W9x/NT)
Jukev3.5 Play back and manage audio files (W9x)
ACID Music Create streaming audio (W9x/NT)
Flash v3 *Evaluation version* Create interactive multimedia content (W9x / NT4)
Shockwave 7; Flash 4 Player Installer (W9x / NT4)
ShockwaveFlash Player (W3.x)
RealPlayer G2 (W9x/NT/Mac)
RealPlayer 5 (W3.x)
Apple QuickTime v3 (Win95/NT4/Mac)
Apple QuickTime (Win3.x)
ShockWave Flash 4 Plug-in (PPC) (Mac)
ShockWave Flash Plug-in (68k) (Mac)
Animation Maker GIF animation tool (Mac)
MacAMP *New version* MP3 and CD player (Mac)
Macromedia Flash v3 *Evaluation version* (Mac)
SoundEffects Recording, editing and conversion software (Mac)

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Campaign for free calls reaches Westminster

MPs debate whether telecom giants are stifling the potential for growth in e-commerce

The campaign for free local telephone calls is gathering momentum with the debate reaching the Palace of Westminster.

In an almost entirely empty House of Commons chamber, Steve Webb, MP for Northavon, put forward the case for what millions of Net users have been demanding for years. "I begin with a confession," he said. "Recently, I have been spending rather a lot of time in the company of Mr Bill Gates. Not literally, I hasten to add; I suppose that 'virtually' would be the way to put it."

After he explained that he had bought a copy of *Business at the Speed of Thought*, the latest book from the Microsoft boss, he continued. "Even if only part of what he [Gates] describes comes true, there is a tremendous opportunity for British business, education and consumers. It is important that we do not miss that opportunity."

NET ACCESS

AOL considering free ISP service

World's biggest service provider umms and errs over free access

AOL has given its clearest indication to date that it will launch a free ISP service. The announcement will come as a severe blow to Freeserve and its July flotation.

Rumours started flying when *The Times* reported AOL was to offer a free service in August, branded as Netscape Online. But as we went to press, representatives of AOL said that no decision on the matter has been made.

Webb then moved on to the crux of his argument, "I want to consider the problem of whether telecom giants – for want of a bet-

ter word – are stifling the potential for expansion in this area." He continued, "My key concern is the metering of local calls and its

implications. In terms of e-commerce, I draw an analogy with being charged for window shopping in the high street. Retailers would be appalled if that were the case, yet we make people pay by the minute for window shopping on the Internet."

The reaction of the few MPs present in the Chamber was far from impressive. Michael Wills, Minister for Small Firms, Trade and Industry said that while he was all for the "liberating and empowering potential of the Internet for every individual and every business, large and small", he argued that regulation from OFTEL wasn't the way forward.

He continued, "Recent history tells us competition is the most effective way to roll out the technology." He concluded, "Companies are free to offer innovative tariff packages."

Listen up, BT
www.unmetered.org.uk



ers, but just because it's a new media everyone thinks it's strange," said Gallant.

The launch will come as a severe blow for Dixons Freeserve. Currently it's in a volatile position, valued at £1.9 billion prior to its flotation.

It's believed that many of Freeserve's users have been gained at the expense of AOL and many in the City are watching it closely as it will provide a benchmark valuation for future flotations of Internet companies.

Free the Internet half million
www.aol.co.uk

But to confuse matters, that popular Online Service Provider says that a subscription free service and, possibly, a separate subscription-based 0800 service could be on the cards.

"We are looking into the sector, and if we think that it is viable then we would move into it," said AOL's Maggie Gallant.

It's unlikely that the company will launch any free services using

the AOL or CompuServe brand. "It might be under the Netscape brand," said Gallant.

It's clear that the company believes that taking a multi-brand approach, with a number of different pricing models, means that it will not be caught off guard by the likes of Freeserve in future.

A multi-brands strategy has been used for years by magazine publishers to motor manufac-

Who wants to be a billionaire?

Internet entrepreneurs top the **Forbes** rich list

Forbes, the US financial journal, has published its annual list of the world's billionaires. As if we needed more proof that the Net's virtual streets are paved with gold, the list was dominated by entrepreneurs who had made their billions from e-commerce, browsers and portal sites.

Unsurprisingly, Mr William H Gates of Seattle came top of the pops with a cool \$90 billion to his name. The Microsoft founder saw his shares nearly double in the past year, despite being

being dubbed a ruthless monopolist by US government watchdogs. While the antitrust investigations continue, Microsoft is expanding rapidly in the US. It teamed up with cable, fibre-optic and wireless companies in hopes of selling software as a fee-based utility.

With \$16.5 billion Michael Dell isn't going to starve. Dell's mail order PC shipments soared past IBM's last year and are closing in on US industry leader Compaq. This means that Mr Dell is the seventh richest man in the world.

For someone that's increased wealth in the shortest possible time, see Jeffrey Bezos of Amazon.com. Shares went up 5,600 per cent since going public two years ago and \$10 billion makes him the 26th richest man. He's diversifying fast with investments in online retailers Drugstore.com, LiveBid.com and HomeGrocer.com.

Silly money
www.forbes.com



LEGAL

Diamond wins MP3 victory

Diamond Multimedia has won an important US appeal that's likely to influence on the way sound files are distributed through the Internet

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Diamond Multimedia Systems' Rio player does not fall within the "digital recording device" definition in the US Audio Home Recording Act.

Despite the fact that the Rio allows users to play songs downloaded illegal-

ly from the Internet, the court accepted that it could not be used for the serial recording of sound files.

Neil McGuiness, spokesman for Diamond UK, says that it had expected to win the appeal. "We expected this victory and that's why we continued with the manufacture and promotion of the Rio." He adds, "We never wanted to look like pirates."

Jollyon Benn of the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) says that it's a "non-starter" pursuing the hardware manufacturers. "We aim to make it difficult for people to find MP3s, so the BPI is taking action against Web sites which contain illegal copies of copyrighted music."

Benn says that the BPI is also lobbying Parliament on behalf of the record industry to get amendments made to the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act which take into account developments in the distribution of electronic music. Listen to the music. And download it www.diamondmm.co.uk www.bpi.co.uk



ly from the Internet, the court accepted that it could not be used for the serial recording of sound files.

The Diamond case stemmed from a lawsuit filed by the Recording Industry Association of America last autumn. RIAA alleged that Diamond's Rio vio-

News just in...

Beenz.com (www.beenz.com) announces it's spending £6 million on promoting its Internet currency. The scheme includes a Tesco-like loyalty scheme, where users win points for making online purchases at participating Web sites... In the US, AOL



(www.aol.com) has cut a deal with 3Com (www.3com.com) to allow its subscribers to send and receive email using the popular Palm computers. The move forms part of the online service provider's AOL Anywhere initiative which aims to allow members to access AOL, well, just about anywhere... With the death of duty free shopping at airports across the European Union, Lastminute.com (www.lastminute.com) has launched an online shopping page where customers can find duty free discounts without even having to go to an airport. Discounts of 17.5 per cent are available



on champagne, cognac, chocolate and caviar... Software which helps reduce the problems of computer crashes during online transactions has been developed by a group of scientists at Newcastle University. A free trial version for online businesses is available at the site of Arjuna Solutions (www.arjuna.com)... In the run up to its flotation, Freeserve (www.freeserve.net) pumped \$10 million in investment into US Internet telephony specialist TelePost (www.telepost.com). TelePost technology will form the basis of a new teleconferencing strand on Freeserve. This will let up to six Freeserve users link up together by conference call. They can also pick up email, fax and voice messages, so long as they are transmitted over the Internet... NetBenefit (www.netbenefit.co.uk) has been warning businesses to be aware of the hidden costs of registering and owning a domain name. It says that all too often services that claim to offer 'free' domain name

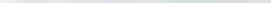


registration end up costing more since the true cost is concealed by "smoke and mirror" trickery... Britain's biggest music label, EMI (www.emiulation.co.uk), has chosen Liquid Audio's (www.liquidaudio.com) Liquid Tracks as its digital music format of choice. This follows EMI taking a 50 per cent share in musicmaker.com which uses Liquid Tracks... French Internet authorities have



announced plans for two new domains for use by French people and businesses. The new .nom.fr domain, has been created for use by families and individuals to boost growth of Internet use in France which lags behind other European countries. The business domain, .com.fr, follows similar moves in other countries, which have added .com to their country-specific two-letter code to create a commerce-oriented domain (such as .com.au in Australia)... On 1 July, MSN (www.msn.co.uk) hosted the Webcast of the opening of the Scottish Parliament.

Six ISDN lines with 12 channels were used and six Compaq encoders running Windows NT 4 encoded the signal for Microsoft Windows Media. Apparently, this was the first time that the Queen has been caught on Web camera... Comet, Britain's second-biggest electrical goods retailer, is joining with Currant Bun (www.currantbun.com), The Sun's ISP.



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LEGAL

Judge sets porn publishing precedent

The material hosted on foreign servers is actionable under British Law. This is the new legal precedent set by a judge in a UK pornography case.

Judge Christopher Hardy's ruling came at the end of the case against Surrey businessman, Graham Waddon. He was found guilty of running the UK's largest Net porn operation, despite the material being held on servers in the US.



LEGAL

New bugging laws for email

Proposed new police powers to intercept emails have been unveiled. Home Secretary Jack Straw said new powers were needed to help the police keep pace with criminals who were exploiting modern forms of communication to plot and carry out crime.

Access to private exchanges in the UK is governed by the Interception of Communications Act 1985. This provides for the interception of conversations on the basis of a signature from the Secretary of State. But the interception of emails is only covered by this Act for those ISPs that are registered public telecommunications providers such as Demon and BT Internet.

As a consequence, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) sought an informal arrangement with key industry bodies such as the Internet Service Providers Association to allow routine access to private emails and Web logs without special legislation. The new proposals would formalise these arrangements in law.

"Interception plays a crucial role in helping law enforcement agencies combat drug trafficking, terrorism, and

His defence argued that publication of the porn was outside British jurisdiction. When surfers view Web pages the material is downloaded onto their computers. That is a fact of life, it's how the Internet works.

But the judge said publication took place in the UK when Waddon uploaded the material to his Web sites. It was also here in the UK that the police downloaded it onto their computer. This ruling means that the site owners are publishing their material in whichever countries the site is being viewed from.

The police claim this is a great victory for them and similar cases are expected to follow.

What are you looking at?
www.internetwatch.org.uk



HOME OFFICE

Interception of Communications

other serious crime," said Mr Straw. "Sophisticated criminals and terrorists have been quick to exploit a revolutionised communications industry and dated legislation of interception. This can not be allowed to continue."

The proposed new powers were met with a cautious welcome from civil liberty groups.

"I'm pleased to see the acknowledgement by the Government of privacy of communications and the Human Rights Act 1998," said Cyber Rights campaigner Yaman Akdeniz.

"As Jack Straw pointed out, disproportionate or unfettered use of interception can have consequences for the rights of individuals. That's exactly the point."

Don't plan your drug heist online
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/oicd/loc.htm

Trendspotting

Our survey says...

Every month we receive a flood of surveys, reports and press releases which each – in their own tiny way – offer a glimpse into the future of the Net. The only problem is that none of the results seem to agree with each other, but you can't have everything.

According to results from Fletcher Research (www.fletch.co.uk), more women are online than ever before. The traditional tabloid stereotype of Web users as being predominantly IT-obsessed male university students no longer applies. The Web population now reflects the UK population as a whole.

The latest figures show that 60 per cent of all UK users are men. But women dominate in the younger age ranges. Among teenagers, girls outnumber boys – with 61 per cent and 39 per cent respectively online.

The ability to communicate with friends is popular with all teenagers. Teenage girls, in particular, seem to be big fans of online Web chats. Email proved popular with both boys and girls (71 per cent and 77 per cent respectively).

The report states that UK Web publishers must wake up to the fact that the Web is no longer just for nerds.

the young, female market is poorly served online

In particular, the young female market is poorly served online. Fletcher even attacked Emap, the publisher of *Internet Magazine* (the nerve!). It said that despite the fact that Emap is one of the leading publishers of women's mags, it has put only one of its women's title online.

The big question remains: can Net users cope with all those Web sites dedicated to 'women who love too much' and '101 ways to the perfect orgasm' – the staple diet of most women's journals?

In the older age range, men dominate use of the Net. Around 80 per cent of Net users in the 55 and over age range were chaps.

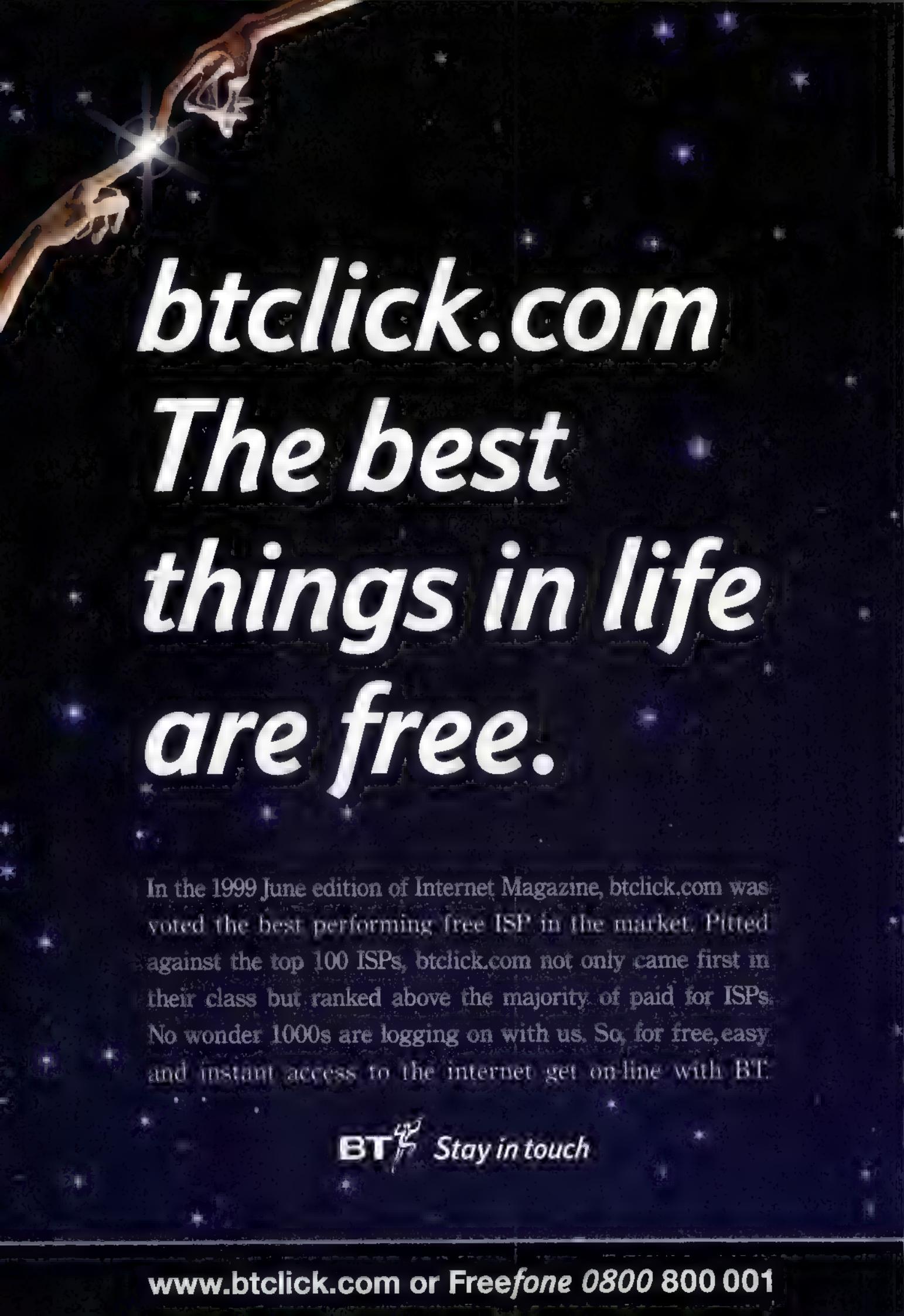
If more proof was needed that the Net has been a hit with older citizens, research from National Express has revealed that ownership of PCs is 20 per cent higher than average with the over-50s. Over a quarter have access to the Net and almost half of them use the Internet three or four times a week. 28 per cent are emailing or browsing the Web on five or more days a week.

Judging by the excessive amount of spare time pensioners seem to have, can we expect to see a flood of Web sites about bingo and gardening?

Moving on to the biggest trend of the past year – the growth of subscription-free ISPs, Freeserve still has a massive lead in the number-of-user stakes. This comes despite increased competition from the likes of Virgin and *The Sun*. But Fletcher Research says that the situation remains fluid, as many existing ISP subscribers haven't dropped their pay accounts.

Around 66 per cent of home Internet users report that they don't pay for their Net access. Freeserve dominates the market with 31 per cent of users having an active account. Fletcher says that aggressive development and powerful online branding was responsible for Freeserve's "formidable lead."

In second place, with 14 per cent, was BT ClickFree. But it's clear that many home users are still not convinced by the subscription-free model. AOL, BT Internet and CompuServe are still popular and come third, fourth and fifth respectively.



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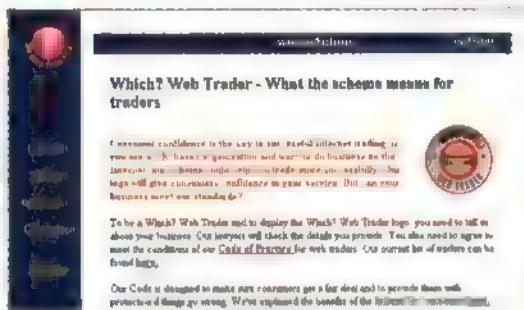
Which? ring of confidence

Consumers' Association logo will identify trustworthy online traders

Which? has created a code of practice to ensure that consumers are treated fairly when shopping on the Net. Companies that abide by the scheme will be able to display a special logo on their sites.

For a UK company to become a Which? Web Trader, they must agree to abide by an e-commerce code of practice. Consumers' Association lawyers will then carry out checks to make sure they are trading fairly.

Once the Consumers' Association has accepted a company as a Which? Web Trader, it will be



Which? Web Trader - What the scheme means for traders

Consumer confidence is the key to the successful trading of your business. By having a general and well-known business as the internet marketplace, more companies will trade more easily. Our logo will give consumers confidence in your services. But, as you know, trust is the foundation of a business.

To be a Which? Web Trader and to display the Which? Web Trader logo, you need to tell us about your business. Our internet and check the details you provide. You also need to agree to meet the conditions of our Code of Practice for web traders. Our current list of traders can be found here.

Our Code is designed to make sure consumers get a fair deal and to provide them with protection if things go wrong. We've explained the benefits of the following:

will be asked to fix the problem or removed from the scheme. Online airline ticket agency Easyjet and Carphone Warehouse are some of the first e-commerce sites to receive the Which? seal of approval.

Apply now for the badge of honour

www.which.net/webtrader

allowed to show a logo on its site. This aims to act as a sort of 'kite mark' for quality.

Mystery shoppers will carry out random checks to ensure companies are keeping to the code. If a company is found to be breaking the code it

LEGAL

Demon fights on

Demon Internet, the popular UK-based ISP, has vowed to carry on fighting the Dr Laurence Godfrey defamation case after the company missed an appeal deadline. In a landmark case, the ISP is being sued by the scientist for allegedly failing to remove a defamatory message from its server.

Demon had until early June to appeal against a pre-trial ruling in March which said that ISPs couldn't use the defence of "innocent dissemination" within the Defamation Act.

The ruling has caused outcry from free speech advocates and Internet service providers. "It's bad news for ISPs," said Daniel Lloyd of Internet Freedom. "A litigant need only so much as suggest that a comment is libelous and the defence of innocent dissemination is withdrawn from the ISP."

Demon has said it will not contest the issue of free speech and the liability of an ISP, but on why Godfrey took over a year to issue the writ. It will be the first UK ruling on Internet libel. **Fighting the good fight**

www.netfreedom.org

Judge for yourself

Internet freedom

Internet freedom

LEGAL

Email libel appeal won

A former foreign minister of Sierra Leone has accepted damages from the BBC over the radio broadcast of an email from a listener describing him as a terrorist.

During the programme *BBC Focus on Africa* on 27 February, the BBC broadcast an email. It contained "entirely false" allegations from a listener describing Dr Abass Bundu as "a terrorist responsible... for destabilising his country."

The BBC paid Dr Bundu damages and legal costs and broadcast a full apology on the radio and Internet. Dr Bundu accepted that the BBC was an unsuspecting accomplice.

Auntie's paying for this bloomer

www.bbc.co.uk

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NETCAFÉS

EasyJet founder opens largest Netcafé



The man behind budget airline EasyJet has launched a 24-hour Internet cafe in London. The aim is to make surfing the Net as exciting and as cheap as possible.

Known as EasyEverything, The Netcafé is based near Victoria station. It's primarily targeted at online shoppers, but can also be used for other online services.

The cafe has 400 Internet terminals and is open 24 hours a day. Customers can search the Internet for just £1 an hour, far cheaper than the rates offered by rival Internet cafes in the capital.

EasyJet owner Stelios Haji-Ioannou said he plans to make money from fees, advertising and by selling coffee. He said at the launch: "You don't need to spend money on a PC for the home, for a pound you can access retailers and get goods cheaper than in the stores. That's a saving even my grandmother can understand."

The London café, the first of many planned for the UK, will soon offer access to a CD writer, letting visitors to download multimedia onto CD.

I'll have a latte, a croissant and an hour's access
www.easyeverything.com



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EPSON

Mr Bun the Baker

Ellis Watson, general manager of CurrantBun

At the beginning of 1999, Ellis Watson had a vision – it was called CurrantBun. In a frank, after the watershed interview, Steve Patient talks to the former marketing director of *The Sun* about the reality of designing a leading ISP in only three months

CurrantBun occupies a large, u-shaped mezzanine floor inside a warehouse on News International's Wapping site. Self-consciously trendy folk work quietly, confer excitedly and move purposefully. At the end of the floor, a single unroofed office emits loud, short commands peppered with "fucking brilliant" and "fuck him".

Ellis Watson rushes out of the office, commanding instant attention. He's of average height, scruffy, unshaven, and has clearly given up exercise and sensible eating to make more time for business. The cleaners are not allowed into the office. He appears to have adopted the phrase 'mover and shaker' as a personal motto.

After a quick greeting, I get to watch him moving and shaking as he alternates between apologising for keeping me waiting and accusing me of keeping him waiting. His staff seem wary of his enthusiasm but appear to like him.

As I start a recorder he says, "Hang on a minute, if I want to tell you something that's off the record, it's off – everything is on the record unless I say first, OK?" He's a professional

"*The Sun* is the surrogate mother to the CurrantBun, but now that we're born, we have to make our own way in the world."

How did you get into the ISP business
Four years ago I was promoted to board level and I've had a fantastic time marketing the largest newspapers in the world with a not insignificant amount of autonomy and a £40 million marketing budget

So from a marketing perspective?

On 3 January [1999] I said, 'Here's a vision. It's called CurrantBun and it'll be a major ISP if I feel we have a brand that can become an Internet brand. I might want to leave my job, my £40 million budget, my great team and my career, and jump into the most fucked up industry that any country or any stage of the industrial revolution has ever seen because it's very exciting to me'. That was at 9am on the third. At 4pm they said yes.

I was told I'd be leaving the newspapers. 'Congratulations, you're a general manager – go and make an Internet business'. I spent every day making an Internet brand, by going to my commercial partners and saying, 'Build an audience and tell them I'm your Internet brand.'

The Bun is nothing to do with the *Sun* to an Asda customer or to someone watching a TV ad. It's the Bun. I get around 300 emails a day from Bun users saying, 'Why's the *Sun* in there? Can't we have the *Daily Telegraph* as well?' And we suddenly realised we had a truly stretchy brand.

It takes a while to get talent, it takes a while to make sure the infrastructure is truly scaleable. Right now we have a company in operating profit. We have in excess of a quarter of a million >



Photography by Frank Rodgers



Free Internet access can be fun as long as your provider takes it seriously

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It's worth taking a serious look at Dialstart. Because if the Internet's no fun, it's no good.

0870 729 7579
www.dialstart.net



dialstart
your first call to the internet

the internet interview



active users, and the first CD-ROM didn't get into anyone's hands until nine and half weeks ago. By the way, as soon as I bore you, let me know, because once you get me going...

No, go on.

Comical though this will sound and arrogant though you think I'm being, CurrantBun has a value of around £400 million. Because in this stupid, fucked up, gold rush country we're in for the next six months, you can start a company called Completeshit.com Ltd, have trading accounts that say you'll make money one day and drive a Saab 911 that afternoon.

But that feeding frenzy won't last forever. We think the race will be over by September. There'll be 300 also-rans and seven players with a rich and vibrant customer base of 500,000 people delivering five million minutes a day or more.

Looking back, are you glad you couldn't use *The Sun's* name?

The Sun is the greatest newspaper in the world according to Ellis Watson, because it's the newspaper I lived and [would have] died for. *The Sun* is the surrogate mother of the CurrantBun, but now that we're born, we have to make our own way in the world. That's fucking brilliant.

[At this point, Ellis Watson hauls himself excitedly out of the office and orders people to make notes about surrogate mothers and CurrantBun. There's a flur-

[ry of activity] You decided against using BT Click. What telco do you use?

We have a proprietary system with a company called Raw Systems Ventures. We've chosen to build our own Telco [CallShare] based switchgear which is modular and can grow with us.

BT is going to win this war. It'll win the Internet access war, it'll win the platform war, and it'll win the marketing war – because it's still an effective monopoly. I respect BT for what it's doing. It's an Internet access brand in at least five or six guises because it hedges its bets, but I don't want to be with a company like that. We've been in that ill-fitting situation with LineOne.

Free ISPs get their income from BT, irrespective of customer satisfaction. Do you think there's a conflict of interest?
I think there's a conflict if you make a direct correlation between interconnect [call fees revenue] and how much you invest in a service. The small get smaller because they base their standard of service on their interconnect fees. That's not what we're about.

So quality customer service is crucial?

Absolutely. If you don't get the standard of service right, you'll never get enough revenue to make it worthwhile. Let's face it, there'll be no interconnect revenue in 12 months.

But Web advertising isn't much of a revenue earner now. It doesn't work well enough. Or are you thinking more of sponsorship-style advertising?

You're right. There's far more site advertising opportunities than demand for it now. By next January, we'll see prices climb past £20 [per thousand impressions] for quality people. Also, companies like us are investing large sums of money in half-decent, intelligent, video streaming.

But I'm not interested in surviving just on £15 or £16 per thousand, I'm interested in £300 per thousand for people I know are going to spend £24,000 on a new car – which is why BMW will pay me those rates.

Why did you decide to keep the CurrantBun site closed?

There's a correlation between your observation and the fact that we're profitable. We have an ISP that isn't a portal, but happens to run Internet services as well. Our subscribers are the only people who can use our content.

You're currently making money out of the phone calls.

We're making money out of the large number of people using our service. It's large enough to get more advertising money

And when the phone call revenues disappear as you predict?

By then I'll have moved that optimum balance and will be out there in freespace.

And you'll still need people using the CurrantBun site?

I'm not worried about being in the ISP game for a long time. Market cap and multimillion pound valuations aren't going to be around after eight or nine months, except for two or three big boys. And that's why, right now, this whole warehouse operation is about baking buns and nothing to do with our ISP. Ultimately, we'll change when we think we can make more money from advertising opportunities in freespace than from call revenue.

So eventually the CurrantBun will become a content-driven service?

The Bun will hopefully become an Internet brand which can stretch far beyond an ISP. The CurrantBun will be an ISP forever. Bun products will be in freespace. Bun Love launched seven weeks ago. I'm surrounded by geniuses who are clever than me, but the best recruitment I ever made was Cupid.

What I do in Bun Love is find Mr Right for Ms Right or Mr Right for Mr Right, or just e-pals. I have a meet and greet service that's reasonably unique. You don't have a name, you have a love handle. You don't send messages, you send love bytes.

It's about deciding when and how to reveal your identity. We've got 45,000 active users, but three times that number are 'take a peekers' – voyeurs to other people's relationships.

You might find some of the most lured, willy-flashing perverts in there, but it's all entirely safe without being sanitised. That's 10 or 15 per cent of our subscribers. We've had 600,000 love bytes sent – think of that in freespace, think of it as a subscription model. That's one of 10 buns we're baking.

We'll have launched at least seven more Bun products by the end of August. That's how we're going to become a future-proof company. We're not going to sit here and go ➤

the internet interview

'We're an ISP, come and give us all your money.' There are 100 other companies doing that and they're stupid. They're not working hard enough – e-commerce is about giving people new opportunities, not changing their habits.

CurrentBun offers content, but Freeserve offers a lot more.

Freeserve has a model that houses everything as though the content is its own. We have a deliberately new model to get the new user happy with what they've got, but truthfully, this is under development. The new home page experience will make it a fundamentally different service. I'd love to have a different service now, but the one I've got has done me well.

You've talked about scalability. How many people do you have working on the service and what sort of development budget do you have?

We have 47 people. I don't have a budget. I have a business plan. I'm in an operating profit and in the black, which is quite a cool thing, but it won't be maintained. Not because my revenues are going to go down – they're going to go up – but because I want to make sure we have a seriously futureproof family of brands. I'm going to spend a phenomenal amount more money, not when I've made a bit more, but when I'm ready to go.

You're rebranding your access software for Asda and now Comet. Are you competing with BT?

Who is the future of the Internet for the next 12 months? Freeserve, AOL, BT? In two weeks' time, AOL will make a £200 million investment because it's pissed off. It sat in America as kings of the hill and said, 'go across the fucking prairie to England because it's about to get the Internet. When LineOne BT, and Virgin Net got involved. AOL said, 'Someone's pinching our divine right to own a fortune and pillage this virgin land'. It spent nine million pounds on CD-ROM distribution.

When Freeserve arrived, AOL sat there saying 'we'll never go free'. It's now three weeks away from rewriting its industry.

Do you have plans to go to free with an 0800 model?

We evaluate telephony all the time, because we're part of a switch-owning family who are also evaluating the

model. It's impossible for anyone to make any money from a completely free Internet line.

Would it make more sense on cable?

Cable will accelerate the ultimate demise of free ISPs using a local rate line, and we'll make sure that while we have our own proprietary systems, we'll never be tied to our own services because we're an Internet brand.

So you can take CurrentBun elsewhere if you want?

Yes, we definitely can. At the moment we choose not to. It pays incredible dividends and we're our own masters. I could give away an 0800 number tomorrow. But I don't want to do that because it'll cost me more money than I'll ever make, by a factor of 30 of 40. But we'll make sure we can run with the hare and hounds.

Do you see CurrentBun as a family service?

Yes, I do. We had a lot of discussion about using the Sun's page three, to give a small example, but we didn't choose to pay lip service to the *Guardian* lobby. *The Sun* is read by 10 million people every day. We did give page three proactive password protection.

There's an optional password on page three, but no family censor on the service. Anyone can go straight to hard porn sites from CurrentBun.

I can't tell you how wrong you are. If you look in the Anorak Cupboard you'll see Cyber Patrol, a £40 service which we choose to spend a small fortune on. Cyber Patrol is an integral part of the service.

You could have had personal log-ins so children are restricted to CurrentBun and safe sites with their passwords.

It's a good idea, and one we're thinking of coming back to.

There's no mention of you in the Sun today, despite two big Internet stories. On the day of the American bombing of the Chinese embassy [in Belgrade], we had a half page ad that said if the allies had CurrentBun, they would've been able to look at that URL and see where

Curriculum Vitae

• Born in 1968, Johnell Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation in 1991 and was promoted to board level in 1995

• Pioneered newspaper price-cutting strategies in the early '90s and devised marketing strategies to maintain the readership once normal pricing structure resumed

• Conceived and launched the Books For Schools initiative across News Corp newspapers from January to April 1999 – the most successful youth sales promotion in history

• Designed and developed CurrentBun.com in three months at the beginning of 1999. It's now the sixth largest ISP in the UK

• Now works directly with Rupert Murdoch in co-ordinating News Corp's global Internet strategy

"I'm an Internet brand that'll go from an ISP to a freespace site, and on to an e-commerce site in perhaps a year's time."

the Chinese embassy was. That got me into the *Today* programme, BBC News and *Have I Got News For You*. We choose not to pillage our relationship with *The Sun*

It contrasts strangely with Murdoch's ruthless promotion of Sky in his papers
You're right. But he owns the platform, and he doesn't own the Internet, and I think there's a difference.

Do you think services such as the Bun need faster Net access to grow?

Yes I do. We'd love to do certain video streams that are beyond the capabilities of 56k modems. Can technology keep up with the Bun? Yes, because people like what they've got. But are we waiting for the next big change? Yes, and then we'll have to work hard to fulfil those opportunities.

So the CurrentBun is a brand which can encompass more than an ISP?

I'm an Internet brand that'll go from an ISP to a freespace site, and on to a proprietary e-commerce site in perhaps a year's time. The Bun will hopefully become exactly as you said it would – an Internet brand which can stretch far beyond an ISP

And nothing off the record.

IM

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mailbox

Please send your thoughts and comments to martynm@internet.emap.com



The down side

I've seen many references to Freeserve in Internet publications and it hasn't all been good news. My own experience of the service reinforces this. Over the weekend of 22 and 23 May I had no access to my mailbox, and my daughter in Exeter had the same experience, so I assume it was a problem with the server.

I need a good connection and reliable email, and Freeserve is failing me on both counts. If I try to connect with Freeserve after 8pm, I end up redialling 10 or more times. If a company wants to gain people's trust, its product must be good quality. "What do you expect for free?" is not a get-out clause.

I can see people moving back to paid-for services where they can rely on good quality service.
AJ Ferguson
fergy@ajferguson.freeserve.co.uk



today's culture. Like other similar churches, it's shown remarkable growth over the past 20 to 30 years. But that doesn't make it a cult or a New Religious Movement (NRM). Don't let sensationalism spoil a good magazine.

John Campbell
John@jesus.org.uk

Perfect Match?

It was nice to see an article in your magazine that dealt with

MP3 creation at home (July issue, page 111), but I can't believe you didn't mention the MusicMatch jukebox. It's the easiest way to record your own MP3s from your CD collection (it's even easier than Audio-Grabber). I can recommend downloading it

from MusicMatch's Web site at www.musicmatch.com

Colin
ColinStirling@compuserve.com

Martyn Moore replies: This is one of many emails we've received about poor standards of service from the so-called free ISPs. Next month's *Internet Magazine* will contain an in-depth report on the negative effects of subscription-free providers. The September issue is out on 24 August.

Jesus Army

I'm glad the Jesus Army Web site (www.jesus.org.uk) merited a mention in *Internet Magazine* (July issue, page 52). But it doesn't deserve to be sandwiched between the Heaven's Gate suicide cult and the Scientologists.

The Jesus Army is an evangelical Christian Church that's committed to speaking into



Martyn Moore replies: There's Real Jukebox too (www.real.com). Where will it all end?

We need police

Further to Richard Dinnick's opinion piece (July issue, page 29), surely it's the responsibility of a site's host to police the content posted by its users.

If I posted unsuitable material on the Web, my ISP would pull down my site and probably terminate my access. People who copy material from other Web sites are in breach of copyright, irrespective of the material.

There's a lot of unsuitable material on the Net and the more that can be done to eradicate it, the better.

Adam Johnson
wild@heart.globalnet.co.uk

IPIX appendix

I felt Richard Baguley's article about IPIX in the June issue was misleading and reached a strange conclusion. I haven't had the benefit of reviewing and testing the IPIX system, but I'm familiar with how it works and what it's capable of (see my site at www.bigfoot.com/~james.rigg/panoguide/software.html).

IPIX is not the only 360° (horizontal) stitching software and it's not the only solution for creating spherical images (with a 180° vertical field of view). But as the law stands, it's the only legal means of creating these images because of IPIX's US and worldwide patents.

I believe IPIX is available as software if you already have the necessary hardware. You can use ordinary cameras to achieve high resolutions and quality.

IPIX is expensive for the professional because you have to pay for a key every time you create an image. No other panoramic imaging solution requires this kind of continuous

Star Letter

Sites out of this world

Have you seen the latest television commercial for BT Internet? The one where the kid shows ET the home pages his family has created?

If not, let me just say the advert seems fine (as fine as talking to an extra-terrestrial can be) until the kid starts to show ET the Web sites.

Microsoft would be proud of the calibre of the site this family's producing, but when the kid

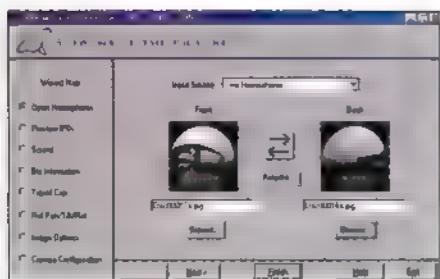
shows ET his own Web site I nearly fell over. I'm sure there are other Web designers out there who, like me, are quite annoyed at this type of advertising – it gives people the completely wrong impression about the nature of building a Web site.

Creating a Web site might be easy, but creating one that looks like that kid's page isn't. I'm just waiting for my next client to ask for a sun to appear from behind a planet, and for me to give a



quote for using Flash or some other fancy pants technology. And I can just imagine them saying, "How much? For something an eight year old kid can do? You must be kidding!"

Mark
mark@manic_wd.freeserve.co.uk



investment, and this makes IPIX unsuitable for an amateur.

But IPIX's greatest advantage is its ease of use. If you haven't got the time or the expertise, IPIX offers a simple and fast way to produce highly effective spherical panoramic images for Web or CD use.

You should review Helmut Dersch's Panorama Tools (at www.fh-furtwangen.de/~dersch) In the true spirit of the Internet, his tools are completely free and extremely powerful.

James Rigg
james.rigg@bigfoot.com

Number 11 – us

I was intrigued to see your top 10 causes of Internet rage in the July news (page 17). I noticed that "Another AOL disk in the mail" was number two in your list – an emotion that anyone using the Internet can relate to.

Here's our own top 10 causes of Internet rage

- 1 ISP technical support people called Kevin.
- 2 Another AOL disk in the mail.
- 3 MTV Europe (old site).
- 4 A 2Mb download that crashes with just 30k to go.
- 5 Engaged technical support times.
- 6 Feeble background music.
- 7 Page windows that pop up again when you try to close them.
- 8 MTV Europe (new site).
- 9 Sites that meddle with your Back button so it doesn't work properly.
- 10 EVERYTHING IN CAPITALS.

The only thing worse, of course, is paying for a magazine which has the same AOL disk glued to its pages – but never to an advertisement page. It always has to be on the opposite side of an editorial page – so you can rip it out and ruin an article you (later) realise you'd like to read.

Not mentioning any specific magazine names of course.

Keith Grant
keef@clara.co.uk

Fax very much

A compliment about *The Knowledge* book that came with your June issue.

Since purchasing a new computer with Windows 98 in January 1999, I couldn't find Microsoft Fax. This puzzled and infuriated me as I'd always had the facility with Windows 95. I almost purchased specific software for a fax program.

Page eight of the book says: "You can find it [Microsoft Fax] hidden away on your Windows 98 CD-ROM in \Tools\oldwin95\Fax". The fax facility on my computer is now working and I've now subscribed to your magazine.

Sean Nicholson
seannicholson@cfjv100.freeserve.co.uk

amazon.co.uk

Mark is this month's winner of a £75 Amazon.co.uk voucher.

Every month our star letter wins £75 worth of Amazon vouchers to spend at the site.

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find out what all the fuss is about...



fasthosts

Global Travel

It was interesting to read your article about buying travel on the Internet in the June issue (page 42). Once people realise the power of the Net, they'll make it their first choice for buying flights and holidays.

But there was an error in one of the addresses in the list of travel sites you recommended. The site for global-flights.com doesn't belong to Global Travel, but instead to a company called The Flight Centre. You'll find the Global Travel site at www.globalholidays.co.uk.

David Brice
info@globalholidays.co.uk

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LINEONE

Back to the future

The Internet will soon join the train, car and telephone as technology that has changed our lives forever. Andrew Starling looks at the effect the Net will have on society

In 10 years, the Internet will absorb personal communications, half our shopping, TV, radio, and a big slice of the rest of our entertainment. It'll also be at the core of most commercial business, from stockbroking to building homes. And just like the train, car and telephone changed the world, the Internet is going to change our society.

Some people are already using email more than the telephone at work. And when we can make international calls at local rates using VoIP (Voice

over Internet Protocol), the Internet will truly take over.

Then there's shopping. In the US, around 30 per cent of car purchases are influenced by the Internet. Virtual tours of real estate are starting to make an impact. Why trudge around 50 houses when you can see them on the Internet and check the local districts, schools, shops and traffic congestion?

Books and CDs are selling well online, along with computer software. Instead of paying £12 for a CD, you can

learn, the tutor is literally at your fingertips. There'll be no more dependence on your local bookshop, library or night school. And no more dependence on tutors and their schedules. You can learn at a speed you're able to absorb. Knowledge is power, and anybody with a phone has access to it.

Some other big changes will come from a change in our shopping habits, as more goods and services are bought online. Lots of middlemen will start to disappear, such as new car salesmen

“The Internet will change our society into a meritocracy. You'll be able to make yourself well-educated.”



pay \$12 (around £7). Almost anything that can be posted through your door is destined to be cheaper on the Internet than anywhere else.

And finally, TV. Once we can download at a rate of two megabits a second, we'll be able to take streaming video and TV from the Internet. That kind of speed comes with ADSL, a technology that BT is testing.

There are already thousands of radio stations on the Internet. But when ADSL arrives, there'll also be thousands of TV channels – you'll be able to watch everything from Thai soap operas to Inuit fishing competitions.

We're in the process of building the most enormous storehouse of information ever created. Entire libraries are scanning their books and putting them online. All you need is a discarded 486 PC and an 0800 Internet connection, and for the cost of a phone line, you have access to the greatest encyclopedia ever created.

Historically, the lack of access to knowledge has been a big barrier to learning, both at school and in adulthood. But that's about to change. If you've got a phone line and the will to

and estate agents. Brokers, who used to buy and sell shares for their clients, will be replaced in the future by a Web page and a CGI script.

So how will all these developments combine to affect our society? Well, it'll equalise it in a way, making it more of a meritocracy. You'll be able to make yourself well-educated – you won't have to rely on other people. It'll also make society more technological. Personally, I won't mind that, but I sympathise with others who will.

As always, imbalances will be created. The middle-class middlemen will be weakened. A new class is in the process of being created, the digerati – people who understand the ones, zeros and lines of code. They know exactly what's going on. There'll also be a class of self-educating, keen Internet users, with shared knowledge from community sites. And then there'll be the rest, God bless 'em, getting left behind.

I'm not sure this is a good thing, but don't worry, every time I try to predict the future, I always get it wrong.

Andrew Starling is the technology editor of Internet Magazine. He can be contacted at andrews@internet.emap.com

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UK WEB SITE OF THE YEAR

It's a peach of a story. One man's online ornithological home page has beaten all comers to be named Site of the Year. Big companies and practised professionals lost out to passionate commitment and personal commitment. **Martyn Moore** tells the amazing story and looks at the other winning sites in this year's Yell UK Web Awards.



THE JUDGING PANEL

Eddie Cheng

Mark Tandy

Ivan Baldwin

Mark Tandy

Richard Withey

Kathy Ives

Mark Curtis

Kathy Ives

Kate Knapp

Martyn Moore

The Yell UK Web Awards, sponsored this year by *Internet Magazine* and .tv, are the most prestigious honours bestowed upon British Web sites.

This year, in a dramatic backlash against big budget – yet sometimes soulless – corporate sites, the winning site was created by a Cheshire ornithologist and is hosted on his free Web space.

Phil Barnett's Birds in a Cheshire Garden won the personal Web site category and went on to clinch the Big One ahead of another solo, non-professional effort, Stuart Cummings's Maidenbower Village Community Web site.

The Awards were launched at the beginning of the year with thousands of visitors to the Yell site (www.yell.co.uk) voting for their favourite sites. Many hundreds of sites were assessed and 10 sites in each category were nominated for an award. Expert judges looked at each of these sites in detail, then met in London in May to

decide the category winners and the overall Site of the Year.

The judges' debate was intense and seriously overran its allotted time. One judge left, but continued the discussion on their mobile phone.

But the result was quite clear. Two sites had risen above all the Flash-enabled commercial entries – two sites that captured the essence of the Internet.

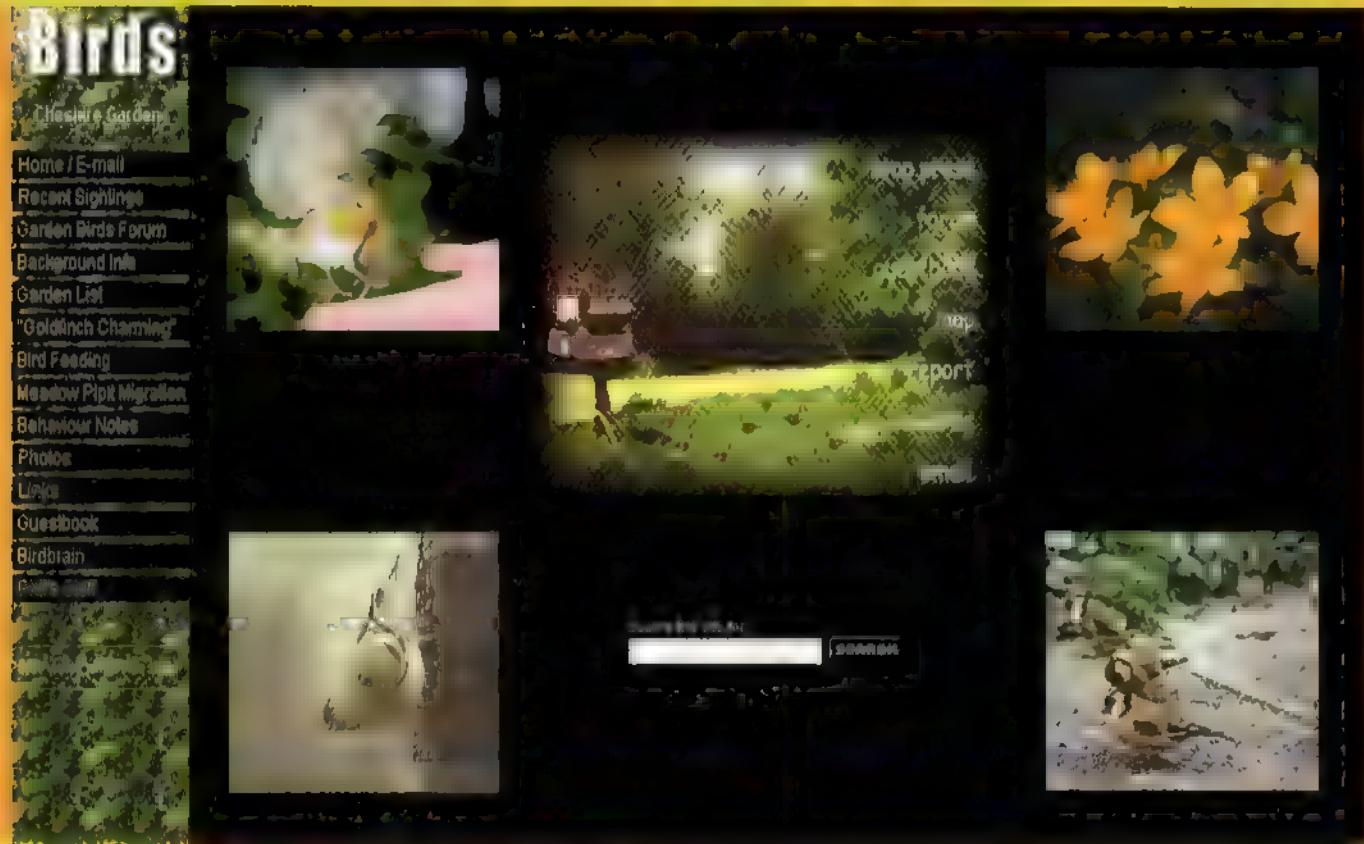
The Maidenbower site exists solely for the residents of the West Sussex village. It works like an electronic parish noticeboard, yet can be appreciated by visitors worldwide for its delicious taste of rural English life.

Phil Barnett's Birds in a Cheshire Garden is a labour of love and simply oozes the man's passion for the nature around his home. It's also a terrific Web site, adored by 'twitchers' but there to be enjoyed by everyone.

1999 is the year of the ordinary person.

AND THE WINNER IS...

Birds in a Cheshire Garden is the UK Web Awards Site of the Year 1999



Site of the Year and Best Personal Web Site

Winner: Birds in a Cheshire Garden
www.abcissa.force9.co.uk/birds

One of the most amazing things about the Internet is the way it makes us all equal. Before the Web, the only way to publish your work was traditional print. But books and magazines cost a lot to produce and buy, and their geographical reach is limited.

Today, you can build a site in a few hours, using a few relatively easily-acquired skills, and post it on the Web for the whole world to see.

The real trick is coming up with a subject that captures the imagination of visitors from all over the world. Ornithology is a good choice, since hundreds of thousands of birdwatchers are scattered across the globe. There seems to be plenty to report on the subject, and therefore lots of new things to add to your site.

Phil Barnett is a birdwatcher, or 'twitcher', and a keen observer of the feathered visitors to his garden in Wilmslow, Cheshire. Most committed twitchers keep a record of sightings, and Phil decided to have his online.

He taught himself the raw HTML code needed to build the site and placed it on the free space he gets from his Force 9 ISP account.



Phil Barnett's love of wildlife and his creation of a Web site dedicated to the nature in his garden have helped him through what he describes as his "dark days of illness". He's wheelchair-bound and the life and colour outside his window have helped him through periods when he could hardly move or think. His site now inspires others all over the world.

There is evidence of Phil's sense of humour on his home page, with little touches like "This site is best viewed on the Internet" or "best viewed on a Tuesday". The comment changes each time the page is accessed. A fairly understated Flash movie introduces the first page, accompanied by the call of a blackbird.

Beyond the front page is an extensive and well-written account of all the birds Phil has seen in his garden. Archived observations are available via simple text links. There are also articles on behaviour patterns and feeding advice.

You can link to another page to see Phil's photography, and some of it's quite remarkable – the shot of a robin feeding from Phil's hand is amazing.

There's a page of links to other ornithological sites and a popular chat forum that has an international flavour to its message threads. Visitors swap opinions and advice in the Garden Birds forum, and can take part in the fun Birdbrain quiz.

Birds in a Cheshire Garden is updated once a month and currently receives around 140 hits a week. You can bet that will go up pretty dramatically now word is out that Phil Barnett's work has been voted UK Web site of the Year.

Best Personal Web Site Finalists

- The unofficial Arsenal Football Club tribute site by Chris Parry, Arsenal World
www.arsenal-world.com
- Kevin Clarke's captivating Inconstant Moon, which is dedicated to all things lunar
www.inconstantmoon.com
- ▼ The huge homage to oriental cooking by Ian Fenn, Chopstix
www.chopstix.co.uk

These three sites, each built and maintained by non-professionals, attract 15,000 visitors a week between them.





Yell Awards 1999

Best Commercial Site (Consumer) finalists

- The clever and engaging approach to colour and presentation Dulux's site www.dulux.com/uk



- The helpful guide to healthy eating and subtle soft sell from myNutrition www.mynutrition.co.uk
- Sk Web from the Ski Club of Great Britain and its comprehensive guide to the winter frolicking www.skiclub.co.uk

Best Entertainment Web Site finalists

- The ultimate online guide to UK theatre, What's on Stage www.whatsonstage.com
- Unsigned Music's forum for new talent www.unsigned-music.com
- Entertainment and much, much more at BBC Online www.bbc.co.uk
- Eurotrash-style Rapido TV www.rapido.co.uk



Most innovative Use of the Web finalists

- The splendid Rufford Ceramic Centre, where you can learn all about earthenware and even fire your own pots in a virtual kiln www.ruffordceramiccentre.org.uk
- Technosphere is a university project that lets you design your own creatures and monitor their activities in a virtual world www.technosphere.org.uk
- The visually exciting Channel 5 Web site www.channel5.co.uk



Best Commercial Site (Consumer)

Winner: [lastminute.com](http://www.lastminute.com)
www.lastminute.com

Visitors can book holidays, hotels and flights, and buy gifts and tickets at the last minute. The Net means there's no time wasted. The dynamic pages on the site serve content from databases that are updated every minute.

Pete Flint's 30-strong team are proud of the service they provide for 30,000 visitors a day. The team sends 200,000 emails a week to registered users, with news of late-breaking deals.

The team is rewarded for its efforts with lots of customer feedback, something a service industry that does business with the public can't get too much of.

And Pete Flint says it's all positive feedback, too...

[Shopping Basket](#) | [Register](#) | [Search](#) | [Home Page](#) | [Go!](#)

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Go!

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From Tickets...
Do things differently treat yourself to a
relaxing weekend at the Midland Hotel in Manchester (Eurostar offer,
60% discount)

From Entertainment...
Get 25% off at the Hammersmith Apollo
Grand opening offer ends
June 26th

From Presents...
An exclusive lastminute.com offer
Create your own 10 song party CD with
your own title for only £2.99 and free
delivery!

From Auctions...
Get 20% off on this evening of a
fabulous chauffeur driven £100
a day and night at the Queen's
Square on July 10th. In the
middle of a great show and
only a few days away at the Royal
Albert Hall

Travel section highlights...



Winner: **Jamba**
www.jamba.co.uk

Most Innovative Use of the Web

Winner: **Genie**
www.genie.co.uk

Genie is the dedicated Web site for BT Cellnet mobile phone users. It's cool, clever and valuable – there's nothing else quite like it. The layout is slightly unconventional and the navigation breaks rules in a creative way, making the site both fun and an adventure to use.

The site can get information, including train timetables and football results, send direct to your digital mobile phone.

Genie uses intrigue and cool to create an in-crowd atmosphere, relying on the fact that its regular users will quickly find their way around, while casual visitors will always find it a bit mysterious.

Welcome to Genie from BT Cellnet, the comprehensive free web service that delivers information direct to BT Cellnet digital phones. To browse Genie, use the left-hand frame to select the main area, then navigate within that area by clicking the options in the top right-hand corner.

Coming Soon Genie Alerts - Service to extend to all UK mobile networks
Take up Genie's ground-breaking Alert service from any UK mobile phone network!

BT Cellnet to Extend genie.co.uk Subscription to Include Internet Access
Get FREE Internet, web and E-mail access with the new Genie Internet service from BT Cellnet

Recommend a Friend & Win a Prize!
One click is all it takes to spread the word about Genie

Genie
Get the latest football and F1 racing news, results and analysis direct to your BT Cellnet phone. All Premiership clubs, plus Rangers and Celtic and all the teams and drivers in Formula 1

Money
Record your share portfolio and have share movements and values sent direct to your BT Cellnet digital mobile phone

SMS
Just dictate into your BT Cellnet digital phone to send an email, fax or text alert. Sign-up now!

Best Commercial Web Site (Business to Business)

Winner: DigitalVision
www.digitalvision.ltd.uk

DigitalVision is an online picture agency. You can search its database for images by category, subject or content, then order images online by setting up an account.

Searching is conducted from the front page and couldn't be easier - provided you keep your search criteria broad enough.

The main target is people who want to buy images, but the site also caters for its suppliers. There's a splendid section for photographers, providing lists of images it requires, picture specification requirements and photography tips. There's even that all-important information about how much you'll get paid.



Best Commercial Web Site (Business to Business) finalists

► Mailing-labels.com lets businesses buy direct mailing lists instantly over the Internet
www.mailinglabels.com

▼ Model Agency Net is an online models directory, that'll find you photographic and fashion models according to search criteria
www.modelagency.net



► Management training, leadership skills and personal development are trained online at Questioning the Balance
www.globalteamwork.com/balance

Best Web Site from a Non-Profit Organisation finalists

▼ Friends of the Earth's Factory Watch gives you information on the polluters in your area
www.foe.co.uk/factorywatch



► Learning to read is fun at Spywatch
www.bbc.co.uk/education/lookandread
► Lots of interactivity to enjoy at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester
www.msm.org.uk

Best Consumer E-commerce Site finalists

- A second finalist place for mynutrition
www.mynutrition.co.uk
- Mobiles and more at Orange
www.uk.orange.net
- Check out the hilarious 'someone's looking' panic button that turns all the pictures into toothbrushes at Condoms UK
www.condomsdirect.co.uk
- And the rather good European online auction site QXL
www.qxl.com



Winner: Walking Britain
www.visitbritain.com/walking

Best Consumer E-commerce Site

Winner: Filmworld
www.filmworld.co.uk

The team at FilmWorld are providing a portal for all film lovers. The site has reviews, trailers, chat and industry gossip. And it sells videos.

The site gets 60,000 distinct user sessions a month - with each visitors looking around four pages a session.

It's officially updated every day, but with registered visitors having access to certain parts of the site to post their own personal film reviews, you could say updating is constant.

The site depends on several strong content partnerships - cinema listings come from Scoot.com and trailers from Film.com. The biggest headache isn't the technology, but categorising hundreds of films.



**Best Youth Web Site
finalists**

- Adding some excitement to exam preparation's GCSE Bites ze www.bbc.co.uk/education/revision
- ▼ Hot yoofact on from Nickelodeon kids' TV www.nicknews.co.uk



- Essential drugs advice and help from Tays de Police www.drugsaware.net

**Best Community Web Site
finalists**

- Students across the country get advice and information at Red Mole www.redmole.co.uk
- Seeing the best of the Liverpool area's MerseyWorld www.merseyworld.com
- Advice, help, support and information on Aids from AVERT www.avert.org
- Adur Online promotes business opportunities along this stretch of the South Coast of England www.adur.co.uk

**Best Content Provider
finalists**

- Awesome content from BBC Online www.bbc.co.uk
- Authoritative financial information from FT.com www.ft.com
- ▼ ITN's news resources online www.itn.co.uk

**Readers' Choice Award
finalists**

- The Evening Standard online at This Is London www.thisislondon.co.uk
- Women in Direct Marketing used their skills to get their name in lights www.wdm-uk.org
- Fans of boy band 5ive lent support to this excellent site www.5ive.co.uk

Best Youth Web Site

Cartoon Network
www.cartoon-network.co.uk

This is a fantastic site. Simple to navigate and riddled with Flash effects, animated GIFs and sound files (popping, squelching and parping mostly), Cartoon Network appeals to fun animation fans of all ages. Check out Toon Files to download sound files from your favourite characters to drive everyone nuts.

There are US and Japanese Cartoon Network sites, but this one is an all-British effort. This site is also updated and redesigned at a frightening rate.

**Best Content Provider**

Winner: SimplyFood
www.simplyfood.co.uk

**Best Community Web Site**

Winner: Maldenbower Village
www.maldenbower.org.uk

**Internet Magazine Readers' Choice Award**

Winner: At Home With Your PC
www.athomewithyourpc.co.uk

Voted for by post and from the Yell Web site, *Internet Magazine* readers chose this excellent beginners' guide to home computing as their favourite Web site.

It's well designed, interactive and covers all the aspects of using your PC at home.

Readers particularly liked the site's friendly look and tone. We liked the way the news opens in a pop-up window when you access the site.





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THE CONTENT CONTENDERS

IT'S THE HEAVYWEIGHT BOUT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

•A FIGHT BETWEEN•

THE VETERAN SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

AND

THE FREE ACCESS CHALLENGERS

DO YOU HAVE TO PAY TO GET THE BEST CONTENT? OR IS
THERE NOTHING OUT THERE YOU CAN'T GET FOR FREE?

GAIL ROBINSON

CHALLENGES THE BIG SIX ISPS TO
LIVE UP TO THEIR PROMISES OF
QUALITY CONTENT

It's the late '90s and you're riding on a high—most of the big media companies are taking the Internet seriously and there's hardly any decent Web content. Those brave souls who want to get onto the Net have to turn to you to get reliable content. CompuServe and AOL had it easy back then—it was sweet for the content providers. But fast forward to the late '90s and it's all gone a bit pear-shaped for the companies that make their money from selling content and charging monthly subscription fees.

Everybody's jumped on the Internet bandwagon, and there's so much quality content on the Web that CompuServe and AOL are finding it hard to compete. What's the point of going to AOL or CompuServe to get your daily news when you can go straight to the BBC (<http://news.bbc.co.uk>) or ITN (<http://www.itn.co.uk>) Web sites and read stories produced by a huge team of news professionals?

Can't these guys read the writing on the wall? MSN and LineOne have both got themselves out of the pay-for-content

business. To do this, you have to deliver a huge audience to your advertisers and partners, and that's where a lot of work is going on—generating traffic for these sites. MSN claims to get 2.3 million unique visitors to its MSN.co.uk portal site per month, you can add LineOne and Virgin Net to that and AOL is users. Suddenly AOL's UK membership of 200,000 is starting to look a bit weak in comparison.

It was the arrival of Freeserve that really shook up the UK ISP market. All of a sudden, the paid-for ISPs had to rethink their offerings—they hit back by offering a more reliable and speedier link to the Internet, but it's hard to pitch that selling point against free Internet access. BT confused the market even further by offering 6800 access to the Internet for users of its paid-for BT Internet service.

So where does that leave AOL and CompuServe? Are they truly turning into online dinosaurs? People are getting used to not paying for content, and they don't have to shell out for Internet access any more.

market and moved to a free content business model. Gillian Kent, group marketing manager at MSN believes AOL and CompuServe are old businesses that haven't moved with the times. "They're working to an expensive model," says Kent. "It's expensive to capture members and you have to keep them for around two years to get a return on your investment."

It costs a lot of money to duplicate and distribute those high-access CDs. Lesley Smith, director of corporate affairs at Freeserve agrees. She believes CompuServe and AOL are working to an American business model that doesn't translate well to the UK market (especially when we have to pay for our phone calls). "They also have the extra cost of maintaining an expensive billing system," says Smith. So if you took away their huge marketing and administration costs, perhaps AOL and CompuServe could then afford to give away their content for free?

Freeserve, MSN, Virgin Net and LineOne have different business models. Companies that provide free Internet access receive a commission payment from BT for every call that goes through their service. This is a great short-term source of revenue. But most of the content providers believe that, in the long-term, revenue will come from e-commerce, online advertising and sponsorship deals.

The case for the defence

CompuServe and AOL are not giving up without a fight. We asked the editorial directors of both services—Garret Keogh at CompuServe and Dominic Wells at AOL—why *Internet Magazine* readers would want to subscribe to their services.

And the case for the defence is: AOL and CompuServe are communities, not simply content providers.

We say: AOL and CompuServe have many thousands of members, so there's a lot of activity in the forums and chat-rooms. But LineOne, MSN and Virgin Net all have their own chat-areas, which are becoming increasingly popular, but it takes time to build a genuine community, and AOL and CompuServe have the benefit of being in the business for a long time.

The case for the defence: Dominic Wells of AOL says: "AOL is far and away the most responsible Internet service when it comes to child safety."

We say: AOL has a good selection of content for children, more than any of the other content providers. By the time you read this, AOL should also have its dedicated Kids Only service. But don't forget, parental control features are built into the latest browsers, so you can restrict access to potentially offensive Web content without subscribing to AOL or CompuServe.

World of sport
Sports news and coverage are a mainstay of online content. Here's how the big six look.

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GLOBAL
INTERNET™

Content providers: a potted history

AOL

America Online was launched in 1986 with a huge marketing campaign that distributed millions of CDs allowing a month's free access. In 1997, AOL bought out its biggest rival, CompuServe. This year AOL bought Netscape to get its hands on its browser technology. The company now has 15 million subscribers worldwide and is a huge force to be reckoned with (its AOL.com site is the top Web property in the world, with over 47 million unique visitors during March this year). AOL has also confirmed that it's testing 0800 access to its service.

CompuServe

CompuServe is the golden oldie of Internet Industry. It was launched back in 1979. Like AOL, it sends out thousands of CDs that give you a month's free access. CompuServe now has one million members outside of the US (around 400,000 in the UK) and is gradually moving its content over to the Web.

LineOne

Launched in May 97 as a joint venture between BT and Rupert Murdoch's News International, LineOne began by charging for access to its service. Recognising that this business model wasn't working, it now offers free content, as long as you register.

MSN

MSN has had many incarnations, and like LineOne, it began by charging a monthly fee for access. At one stage, it was plugging a TV-style interface that sent down hugely resource intensive programs to your desktop. Microsoft quickly realised that people wanted fast access to information rather than fancy graphics, so it revamped its service, becoming a free portal. The latest news from MSN is a deal with BT to offer free Internet access. BTClick provides the access, MSN provides the content.

Virgin Net

With an eye on revenues from e-commerce, Virgin Net went free with its entertainment and leisure focused service. The service now has around 145,000 subscribers.

Freeserve

Freeserve transformed the ISP market when it was launched in September 1998 by the Dixons Group. It now connects more people to the Internet in the UK than any other ISP – its 1.25 million subscribers give Freeserve 36 per cent of the UK Internet access market. A flotation is likely to take place soon – the company is valued at anything up to £1.9 billion.

The case for the defence: Dominic Wells again: "The online versions of several top magazines are only available on AOL. They include *The Economist* (www.economist.com), *Autosport* (www.autosport.com), *When Saturday Comes* (www.wsc.co.uk/wsc), *Inside Soap*, *Practical PC* and *2000AD*."

We say: That's true, but there are lots of other good quality, free magazines in these subject areas that are online. For instance, you could get your footie news from Football 365, or your motoring news from Top Gear.

The case for the defence: Garret Keogh says: "What differentiates CompuServe from other providers is our range of premium products, based around business information services from companies such as Dun & Bradstreet and Equifax."

Our billing structure means you can buy business reports at a competitive rate and have the cost added to your CompuServe bill, so it's quick, easy and secure."

We say: LineOne also offers company information from ICC, at preferential rates for LineOne members. And remember, the cost of this quality information from CompuServe is on top of your monthly subscription fee.

The case for the defence: Garret Keogh again: "Just as I depend on magazines and newspapers to make critical selections for me, and aggregate the best of what's out there, so CompuServe delivers a range of information providers, original content, quality journalism and an integrated, interactive community."

We say: Isn't that what all the portal sites do – free or paid for?

Freeserve is the king of aggregators, bringing together a huge set of links to useful Web sites. MSN claims it only works with best of breed content providers. Meanwhile, LineOne brings exclusive content from *The Times* and *Express* newspapers.

Should you pay for content?

It's unfair to say the content on CompuServe and AOL is poor, because they both provide great content. The problem is, the standard of the content provided by the free portal sites is also high. You can get all the information you need from MSN and LineOne. Freeserve can be tricky to use and it doesn't offer much original content, while Virgin Net is good but limited in its coverage. AOL has more to offer for its subscription fee than CompuServe – for instance, the content for children is good and should pacify any parent worried about the seamer side of the Internet. AOL also wins points for a bit of online chat – Tony Blair, Tiger Woods, Geri Halliwell and Britney Spears have all appeared.

It's also worth remembering that a subscription to AOL and CompuServe buys you more than just content. Perhaps the biggest difference is that CompuServe gives you technical support for the cost of a local call and AOL's support lines are free. You can expect to pay 50p per minute for support from other ISPs.

There's so much great content out there and MSN, Virgin Net, Freeserve and LineOne are doing a fantastic job of pulling it all together. Paid for content has had its day, and surely it's only a matter of time before CompuServe and AOL realise that.

im

Hold the front page

As we went to press, there were rumours that AOL was looking at providing a free Internet access service in the UK – the power of the press, eh! The company refused to comment further than this official statement from David Phillips, MD of AOL UK: "As we evaluate the rapidly evolving Internet business models throughout Europe, we're looking at a variety of options, including the so-called 'free' services model as an addition to our successful subscription-based AOL and CompuServe brands. If the 'free' services model proves to be a viable, niche-market business, then AOL UK, with its multiple brands, is ideally positioned to successfully enter this niche".

We wouldn't call free Internet access a niche market – Freeserve has over 30 per cent of the UK Internet market (although Freeserve's floatation value did drop substantially once this AOL rumour was leaked).

The statement suggests it's not free content that AOL will be giving away, but just free access. Another issue is the brand name that AOL will use. It won't want to undermine the names AOL and CompuServe, so perhaps the new service will appear under the Netscape brand?

Virgin Net v AOL v Freeserve

Until a couple of years ago, we would have acknowledged AOL as the king of content. Here Internet Magazine pitches AOL's content, which is strong on entertainment and leisure, against two freebie portals, Virgin Net and Freeserve.

Have I got news for you?

When it comes to news, Virgin Net can't compete with the other providers. Virgin's content is restricted to the nice things in life – music, films and sport – and it doesn't even attempt to break into the world of hard news.

AOL's coverage of world events is comprehensive, but it's not unique – most of the stories come from the newswire services (Reuters

version of the magazine *Inside Soap*. Film information comes from the Internet Movie Database, alongside movie reviews from *The Guardian*. But AOL's music content isn't as good as Virgin Net's coverage – there's not much original copy and the news is pulled direct from the wire services. However, AOL takes a broad view of how you might want to spend your leisure time, and has an Arts section that covers what's on at theatres and museums around the UK. Hobbies also have a home on AOL, and it's not just the common stuff like gardening and motoring – you can also find out about more exotic hobbies, such as paragliding. We liked AOL's attempt at localising its service. On a map of the UK, you can click on an area and you're taken towards relevant content, such as local papers and what's on guides.

AOL ★★★★
Virgin ★★★
Freeserve ★★

The world of sport

While many content providers think sports coverage begins and ends with football, AOL stretches its content to take in less popular sports, such as badminton and squash. The popular sports – football, tennis, cricket, rugby and golf – are also



the Press Association and Associated Press). Freeserve covers the same ground as AOL, taking much of its news direct from the Press Association's wire service.

AOL ★★★★
Virgin ★★★
Freeserve ★★

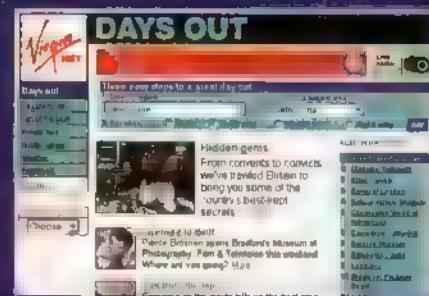
Let me entertain you

Virgin Net fares better when it comes to entertainment. Music is covered with news stories pulled from MTV, the NME and dotmusic's Web site. There are also original features, interviews with artists, and gig and record reviews. Film news comes from CNN, Mr Showbiz and Hollywood Online, and you'll find reviews of all the latest movies. TV and radio coverage is a little esoteric,



but AOL's TV section is better than Freeserve's. AOL's radio coverage is better than Virgin's, but Virgin's music coverage is better than AOL's. AOL's entertainment coverage is less

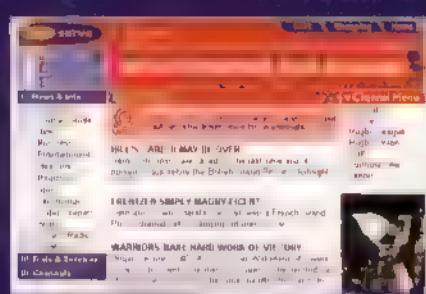
comprehensive and majors on football – including RealAudio commentaries of Chelsea, Everton and Nottingham Forest's matches. Sports news is gathered from reputable sources including the BBC, Sporting Life, Bloomberg Sport and the



The TV section of the Virgin Net site consists of links to Web TV stations – it's a limited choice, but it's fine if you've been searching for Tunisian TV all these years.

Freeserve uses Carlton Online and its Popcorn site for its movie coverage – a sensible choice. General entertainment news comes from the Press Association, but it's not original or exclusive content.

AOL's entertainment coverage gets our vote though. It does have some exclusive content – you can get the latest soap gossip from the online



Wish you were here?

We were rather fond of Virgin's Travel section. It takes a family approach with its articles and has a useful database of days out – you can select a region and the type of day out you want, and it gives you a list of all the relevant events. The section also boasts a holiday and hotel finder (courtesy of Leisure Hunt). A nice addition is the noticeboard, where you can put up your own messages – it's great for putting up small ads, like asking for travelling tips on a specific country or advertising your villa in Tunisia.

AOL's travel section has a comprehensive set of links to travel resources. You'll find a smattering of exclusive content in the shape of travel articles in the AOL Traveller section. Freeserve relies on the services of Bargainholidays.com to provide its content, so it could have these guys a thing or two, though – check out Expedia for a superior travel service.

AOL ★★★★
Virgin ★★★★
Freeserve ★★

Should you subscribe?

AOL's content is certainly comprehensive. It's strong on leisure and entertainment, but it doesn't scrimp on the more heavy-duty areas. The finance section is definitely worth a mention, with its business news and company research databases. You can even keep track of your share portfolio. The learning channel also boasts a good selection of reference resources as well as GCSE revision guides.

But is it enough to persuade you to stump up a minimum of £4.95 a month? Quite frankly, no. There's not enough original content that you simply can't live without to warrant the monthly fee. We were also put off by the slow speed of downloads and the amount of memory AOL needs to run – 32Mb didn't seem to be enough, even when AOL was the only program running.

Virgin Net has its limitations – the coverage is limited to the trivias of life. Its strong areas are music and films, but if you're after business or financial news, this isn't the service for you. Freeserve is an aggregator par excellence, but it doesn't have any exclusive content – it's just a well managed and sensible selection of links to other excellent content providers.

How much is it going to cost me?

AOL From £4.95 per month
Virgin Net Free
Freeserve Free

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For business the Internet means, what was once an interesting possibility is now a competitive necessity, and is becoming essential for small, medium and large organisations alike.

Because ISPs are crucial to the success and effectiveness of Internet access and because different businesses have different requirements, choosing the right service provider is vital.

There are a number of Internet Service Providers in the UK, but very few have the proven expertise and experience that is needed to give your business the support it needs - NetDirect is one of the few.

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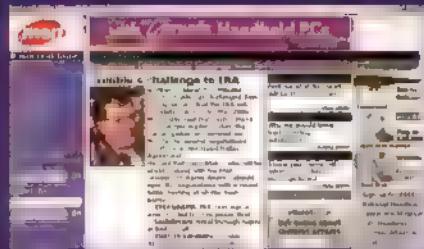


MSN v LineOne v CompuServe

MSN and LineOne have changed from paid-for to free services. CompuServe, on the other hand, has been charging for its content since its launch in 1979. How do the services compare?

Have I got news for you?

LineOne has the benefit of access to content from *The Express*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* because of its partnership with Rupert Murdoch's News International. If it's really short



on news, it can even call in the services of *The Star*. Understandably, most of the LineOne news content comes from these papers, aided by the news wires. If you don't mind the politics, this is a well-written and comprehensive news service. Meanwhile, MSN has links with NBC and MSNBC to provide news, although it has a US slant. MSN combines this content with headlines from News Unlimited, FT.com, The Electronic Telegraph and *The Guardian*. The coverage is comprehensive and well collated. In comparison, CompuServe's news, although well compiled, is nothing you can't get for free elsewhere. Many of the news headlines are gathered from the wire services, and the service relies on ITN for its world news stories.

CompuServe ★★

LineOne ★★★★

MSN ★★★★



It's the business

Considering CompuServe's background as a straight business information service, we expected CompuServe's business coverage to be excellent. The problem is, it has lots of services there that offer you detailed information on companies and the market – including reports from Dun & Bradstreet and Equifax – but you only get a small amount of information for free. If you want anything more you have to pay extra on top of your standard CompuServe monthly fee.

MSN and LineOne have worked hard on their business content and we found their services just as comprehensive as CompuServe's. MSN takes its business stories from *The Guardian*,

Teletext, FT.com and *The Economist*. You'll also find information on all UK-listed companies – you can get basic company data and their annual reports for free. And if you travel regularly on business, you'll appreciate MSN's Business Travel service which is taken from Expedia.

LineOne's business coverage is also impressive. The news stories are culled from *The Times*, *The Express* and the newswires. There are business advisers to answer your questions and offer advice. There's also plenty of careers advice and a members-only classified ads section where you can advertise your services. Company information comes from ICC – LineOne members get preferential rates, but this is not a free service.

CompuServe ★★

LineOne ★★★★

MSN ★★★

Money, money, money

All three services have made a good stab at covering personal finance, with LineOne's content just sneaking ahead. Its service takes information from the money sections of *The*



Express and *The Times*, along with weekly updates from the Money Facts Web site. All areas of finance are covered, from insurance through to pensions, complete with best buy tables in every section. My Portfolio lets you track your stocks and shares, and there's a full share price service.

MSN's offering is also impressive, with interactive tools that let you compare various credit card and bank rates. Again, you can keep tabs on your own portfolio of shares. There's also a service that lets you compare the current accounts at various banks, so you can pick up the best rate – it does the same for ISAs, mortgages and loans.

Meanwhile, CompuServe's share portfolio management product should be live by the time you read this. Despite some good links with *Personal Finance* magazine, CompuServe lacks the rate comparison service you get from MSN.

CompuServe ★★

LineOne ★★★★

MSN ★★★

Pack your bags

When it comes to travel information, it's hard to beat Microsoft's Expedia. Cheap flights, package holidays, and hotel and car hire reservations are all covered by the service. That's backed up with travel news and resort and country guides.



LineOne's offering is less comprehensive – you get an accommodation guide and travel articles from *The Times*, but it doesn't compete with Expedia. CompuServe has details of bargain holidays, flights and city breaks, but its travel guides don't cover the breadth of countries that Expedia handles.

LineOne wins in the online shopping arena. Its shopping guide is one of the most comprehensive sets of links to online stores we've seen – it also rates the sites and lets you know if they trade securely. CompuServe's shopping mall offers you access to a restricted set of online merchants, and MSN's service is less than comprehensive.

CompuServe ★★★

LineOne ★★★★

MSN ★★★★

The world of sport

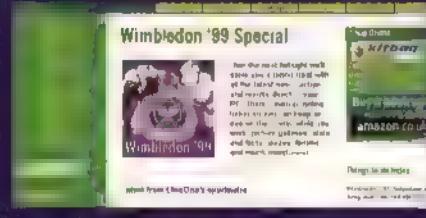
CompuServe's coverage is commendably good, although it focuses on the big crowd-pullers, such as football, cricket, golf and Formula 1.

There are facts and figures galore, and we all know how much sports fans love their statistics. LineOne gets the award for its breadth of sports coverage, with everything from athletics through to snooker. MSN is less strong on its sports coverage – for instance, on the weekend before Wimbledon started, there was a distinct lack of tennis news.

CompuServe ★★★

LineOne ★★★★

MSN ★★★



Should I subscribe?

There's nothing wrong with CompuServe's content, the problem is it just doesn't offer anything more than the free services. CompuServe can no longer sell on the strength of its business services, and it doesn't offer much that you can't get for free elsewhere on the Net. All of your information needs could be satisfied by a combination of LineOne and MSN.

How much is it going to cost me?

CompuServe

LineOne

MSN

From £6.50 a month

Free

Free

Ever get the feeling your ISP hasn't got room for you?

Sound familiar? First, you can't get a connection. Or it's so slow you cringe at the thought of your next phone bill. Then there's support — thousands of new users, masses of calls to the help-line, total gridlock (that's £5 for a ten minute call with many 'free' Internet providers).

It's time you called Direct Connection. We always upgrade our network capacity ahead of demand so you're assured a high quality connection. In fact, using our nationwide access number you may never hear an engaged tone again. And our support was recently awarded top honours by Practical Internet.

For a better connection, call Direct Connection now on 0800 072 0000 or visit our website.



Call now on
0800 072 0000

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- BT Home Highway or Business Highway compatible
- Internet access at local call rates
- Global roaming; Internet Explorer browser
- 7 day-a-week technical support at local call rates
- Corporate services available



May '99

www.dircon.net

THE INTERNET BILL OF RIGHTS

It's time Internet users started demanding their rights. And we're going to help. Richard Baguley outlines the *Internet Magazine* bill of rights for Internet users



It's a sad fact of life that you, as an Internet user, have relatively few rights. Whether you read them at the time or not, you have already agreed to a legally binding document by subscribing to your ISP.

This document – called the Terms and Conditions or Acceptable Use Policy – covers what your ISP can and can't do, and what the service provider expects of you in return.

This document usually presents itself when you install the ISP software. If you're now starting to worry about having clicked on 'I Agree' without reading it, you should be able to check this document on your ISP's Web site.

The bottom line is that, when you look at the long list of clauses that constitute your agreement with the ISP, you'll find you have to commit to lots of things, and the ISP doesn't.

You have to notify the ISP the moment your details change, but the ISP can modify or discontinue both service and content without any warning at all. For example, AOL states that "specific content and services... may be removed without notice or may be subject to additional usage-related surcharges."

Several of these clauses let ISPs get away with something approaching murder. Their servers can crash, their Net connection can die, but you can't do anything about it. Virgin Net does agree to "provide sufficient access servers to ensure a high standard of connectivity to the Service", but this kind of promise is pretty rare.

ISPs can lose your email and wriggle out of any responsibility thanks to their terms and conditions. And if an ISP loses your Web site? Tough. Most of them offer no guarantee that their service will work, and this includes hosting. We want to stop ISPs getting away with this.

Freeserve's terms and conditions contain such gems as "You agree that... we shall not be liable in contract, tort, negligence, statutory duty or otherwise, for any loss or damage whatsoever arising from or in any way connected with this contract, including... loss of business, loss of profits, business interruption, loss of business information, or any other pecuniary loss (even where we have been advised of the possibility of such loss or damage)." Reassuring, eh?

Even Yahoo!, one of the world's biggest Web companies found itself in hot water recently when it changed its terms and conditions. Deep in the legal jargon, it appeared that Yahoo! was claiming ownership of everything hosted on its servers. Yahoo! quickly moved to clarify the situation, but there are some ISPs who do claim copyright over your labours of love or your online business outlet.

A call to action

With people increasingly relying on the Net for communication and business, this kind of agreement is becoming unacceptable.

We want ISPs and other Internet companies to realise that they cannot supply a substandard

service. We want Internet companies to make some basic promises of what they will and won't do for the people who rely on their services.

What we've done is create a draft Internet Bill of Rights (opposite), which contains the *Internet Magazine* basic, 10-point proposal. We believe what we're asking for is reasonable for subscribers and achievable for ISPs.

We need you, our readers, to tell us what you think. Are we asking for too little or too much? We'll also canvass opinion from the relevant consumer groups, government organisations and the ISPs themselves.

We cannot stress how important your involvement is. If you want these basic rights to become a reality, please get involved. Read the draft Bill of Rights, let us know what you think, and if you agree, send it to your ISP and we'll see what they make of it.

Over the next few months, our Internet Bill of Rights will become concrete. Then we'll be asking all the UK ISPs to agree to it on your behalf. We'll let you know what they say.

How to contact us

Email rights@internet.emap.com
Fax (0171) 880 7441
Post Internet Bill of Rights
Internet Magazine
Angel House
338-346 Goswell Road
London EC1V 7QP

THE INTERNET BILL OF RIGHTS

To participate in our campaign, copy or cut out this page and fax it to us or your ISP, or email the online version from www.internet-magazine.com/rights/billofrights.html

1 The right to a good level of service

Every ISP should ensure it has sufficient resources and backup systems to guarantee that its service (such as mail servers, usenet news, Web server) is available at least 99 per cent of the time. If the company has technical problems, users should be compensated. Every UK ISP should also agree to abide by the ISPA's code of practice (at www.ispa.org.uk/practise.htm).

2 The right to have constant availability

While some busy tones are inevitable, no user should have to put up with too many. Every ISP should ensure it has sufficient capacity to deal with the incoming calls and that the telephone company can handle these calls. Users should be compensated if the ISP or telephone company can't manage this.

3 The right to fast page downloads

Because we, as Internet users, are paying for the time we spend looking at Web pages, every ISP should make sure we can download pages at an acceptable speed by ensuring they have enough capacity to handle our Internet traffic.

4 The right to reliable email

We rely on email as a way to communicate, so every ISP should ensure our emails are delivered promptly. We also believe every ISP should ensure its system is reliable enough to guarantee that no incoming email will be lost.

5 The right to good technical support

Technical support is a vital part of using the Internet, so we insist on reliable, easy to contact technical support, staffed by people who are able to answer our questions quickly and accurately. If this technical support costs more than a normal phone call, this should be made clear before we call.

6 The right to know exactly what we are paying for

Every ISP should provide full and comprehensive details of exactly what users will have to pay to use their services, including details of any extra charges and when these will be charged. If there are any charges which will be made by other companies in connection with the services provided (such as domain name registration fees), this should be made clear before I sign up.

7 The right to privacy

Every ISP should do everything within its power to ensure our email, details of the Web pages we look at and our personal details are kept secure and are not supplied to any third

parties without our consent. Every ISP should also comply with the LINX Best Current Practice on User Privacy when it is completed (available at www.iupf.org.uk/privacy-bcp.html)

8 The right to freedom of speech

No ISP should remove, alter or restrict access to my Web pages without first making good efforts to contact me and discuss any problems. Any reasons which could cause my Web pages to be removed or blocked (such as surpassing a certain number of hits) should be made clear before I sign up. ISPs should respect my right to freedom of speech and to use the Web space they provide to say what I want without fear of censorship.

9 The right to terminate an account without paying a penalty

If I decide to terminate an Internet access account, my ISP should not charge me a termination fee. Furthermore, it should process my request to terminate the account within five working days.

10 The right to move domain names and Web sites without hassle

If I decide to move my Web site or domain name to another ISP, the previous host should fully and quickly co-operate with this process and not charge an administration fee for doing so.

Subscriber: I support the Internet Magazine Bill of Rights campaign and believe that I am entitled to the rights listed above. I ask you, my ISP, to participate in the Bill of Rights campaign and pledge your support by signing below

Signed : (your name here) _____

Email : (your email address) _____

Fax : (if applicable) _____

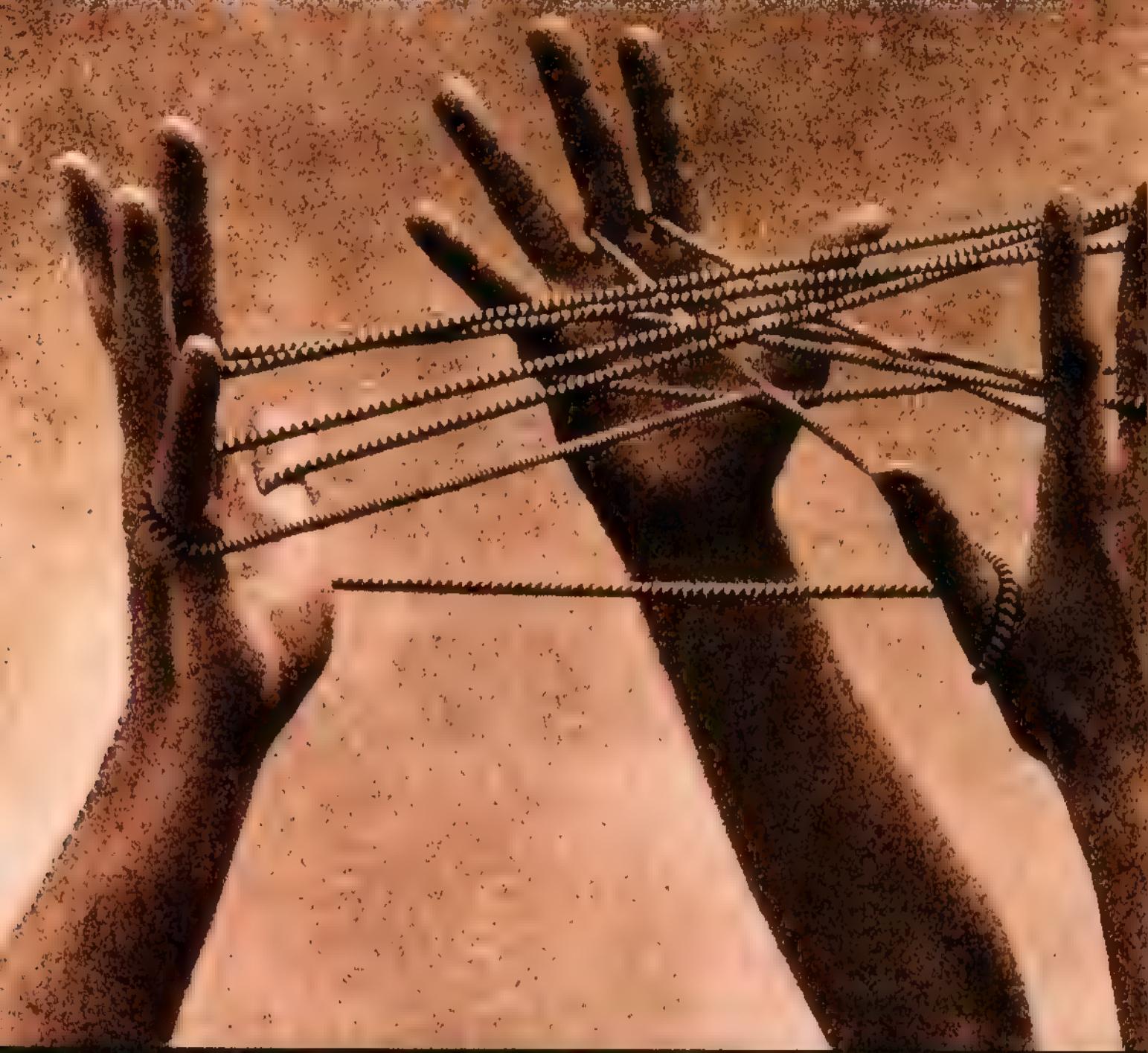
ISP: I agree in principle to the Internet Bill of Rights and would like to be consulted as part of the campaign:

Signed : _____ Date : _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

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Changing the way Britain buys cars



Job Box lets you put an unlimited number of adverts on Yahoo! for only £700 a month



The best way to find a job is set to change dramatically. Until recently, employment sites on the Web were only playing a small role in the recruitment process and were limited to specific industry sectors, such as computing or telecoms. But now that Britain's most popular Internet site – Yahoo! UK & Ireland – has unveiled a new employment service, looking for a job will never be the same. Around 75 per cent of all UK traffic uses the Yahoo! search engine and directory

guide. In December last year, 5.3 million people visited Yahoo!, but with a continuous stream of newcomers, the total number could double before the end of the year.

When Yahoo!'s own survey revealed that nearly three quarters of its users were browsing the Web to look for jobs, a penny or two must have dropped in the minds of the marketing staff. Classified advertising is one of the most lucrative of revenue streams for broadsheet newspapers, but none have Yahoo!'s audience of around four million people a month (and counting). Only 2.3 million of these people were looking for a job, or expecting to be, at the time of the survey – the rest were casually interested. But by putting an employment button at the top of the home page, Yahoo! has made the new service instantly accessible to everyone – all it takes is one click.

That click immediately takes you to a search engine offering you a choice of location, function, industry, and whether you want to work full-time or

part-time (you can even select holiday and maternity cover). In the list of results, you can click on each job link to get a more complete description. You can then click on a link to the company's Web site to assess your potential employer in more detail.

The advantage of Yahoo!'s service is the price. Advertising in broadsheet newspapers can cost up to £10,000 per vacancy, so it only includes positions that offer a high salary. Alternatively, you can advertise in local newspapers or special interest magazines for around £1,500. But the Internet is easily the cheapest option. One of Yahoo!'s key partners in the new service, 1st-wave.com (Europe), will supply businesses with a new piece of technology that'll bring the price down to bargain basement levels. The technology is called a Job Box (www.jobbox.net) – a mini Web server that lets you put an unlimited number of vacancies on Yahoo!'s pages for only £700 per month.

This is equivalent to advertising 10 vacancies a month at £70 each. ➤

I believe I have the qualities you're looking for...

Want to find a job online? Here's a thumbnail guide to save you clocking up a very large telephone bill and wasting your time in the wrong places

1 Bookmark Yahoo!'s Employment service

Yahoo! already has four leading recruitment sites as partners (Taps.com, The Guardian, jobbox.net and Contracts 365) and will add at least six more in the near future. It's likely to become the definitive one-stop place to find information from a variety of sources, so bookmark it now and watch it develop. You can go straight to the service by clicking on Employment at the top of Yahoo!'s home page (www.yahoo.co.uk), or by using the full address <http://uk.classifieds.yahoo.com/uk/emp>.

2 Give yourself a lightning tour of the sites

We mean lightning – don't spend too long at any one of them, just enough time to enter a quick search and see whether you find the site easy to use.

Different people will like different sites – they all have their own idiosyncrasies. Take a look at the kind of jobs you get in response to the criteria you enter – if you can tear yourself away fast enough, you'll soon find your favourite and most useful resource.

www.reed.co.uk

www.careermosaic-uk.co.uk

www.jobsite.co.uk
www.monster.co.uk
<http://taps.com>

3 Avoid sites with plenty of jobs but no detail

It's scandalous to only provide a few lines of text and not include a link to further information. Hyperlinks make the Web go round, and including a button to take you to an employer's Web site is the easiest trick in the world. Sites such as Reed Online (www.reed.co.uk) appear to have forgotten this – it's simply translated the old newspaper advert mentality to the Web.

4 Decide whether you like using free text searches

For some people, pull-down menus are the best way to look for a job. If you have to enter text into a job title field, you're wasting time guessing what the winning combination of words will be. You don't know what a potential employer will call a vacancy. JobSite (at www.jobsite.co.uk), for instance, is well constructed and has lots of vacancies, but it suffers from a free text-only search engine. For me, it's a far better idea to choose function, industry and location from a list and browse the result.

5 Don't forget the online newspapers

Most of the newspapers online have done a good job. You'll find The Guardian employment site at www.jobsunlimited.co.uk and The Daily Telegraph recruitment site at www.appointments-plus.co.uk. The Daily Telegraph has an easy to use search facility with a good mix of free text and pull-down menu tools, even if it suffers from not presenting enough detail with each vacancy. The Daily Mail has produced a site called People Bank (at www.peoplebank.com).

6 Consider the smaller sites covering specific sectors

If you're looking for industry-specific Web sites, you can go to GAAPweb (at www.gaapweb.com) for vacancies in accountancy or Top Jobs on the Net (at www.topjobs.net) for management. Estate agents can go to Estate Agency Personnel (at www.estateagency.co.uk) and caterers should visit City Catering (at www.citycatering.co.uk). DotJobs (at www.dotjobs.co.uk) gathers classified listings from the Electronics Times, The Engineer, Food Manufacture, Packaging Magazine and Printing World and puts them all

in one place. AD Hunter (at www.adhunter.co.uk) selects adverts from the UK's regional press.

7 Watch your CV

Some sites will help you write your CV and send it to vacancies that match your criteria. But make sure your current employer doesn't receive a copy. You should keep your CV updated on a monthly basis – new skills can develop quickly and you might want to change the way you describe yourself after some trial and error. Include a date for erasing your CV from these systems, otherwise it'll still be doing the rounds after you've found a new job.

8 Use the online information resources

For general information, visit The Department of Social Security Web site (at www.dss.gov.uk) to get the lowdown on benefits, National Insurance, Child Support and other services. The Employment Service (at www.employmentservice.gov.uk) has an excellent and easy to use site giving information about the Job Seekers Direct telephone service. And Disability Net (at www.disabilitynet.co.uk) exists to provide equal opportunities for the disabled.

The Job Box harnesses database technology and bypasses the usual design and agency fees, making it the most economic advertising route yet.

Using a Job Box, you'll be able to post a vacancy from your desk. You simply fill in a pre-designed template and post it to Human Resources for authorisation. You can make the job appear on the company Intranet at the touch of a button, or post it to Yahoo! at your convenience.

"This will strengthen Yahoo!'s position as a portal and pose a considerable threat to newspapers," says Bob Wootton, director of media and advertising affairs at the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers. "Recruitment advertising is more lucrative for newspapers than display advertising, which tends to be bought at keener prices negotiated by media agencies. Newspapers will have to trim the fat off their pricing structure to survive."

Existing Internet sites could also feel the pressure. Yahoo! has aggregated the major players (Taps.com and the Guardian post their listings onto Yahoo!), but the Job Box represents such a radical new approach that it challenges the pay per display mentality which dominates other services.

Dave Ferguson, MD of 1st-wave.com (Europe), founded TopJobs on the Net – the UK's premiere recruitment site, which floated on America's secondary stock exchange (NASDAQ) for \$109 million a few months ago. Ferguson is convinced that the Job Box represents a better way forward.

"Job sites cater extremely well for medium to senior management positions. But it's always been my ambition to see the Internet as a medium of equal opportunity," he says. "With this kind of business model, companies can afford to submit details of any position, from the cleaner through to the MD."

Ferguson has big plans for the future. He wants to see all Britain's Job Centres place their list of vacancies on the service. It can be expensive for the unemployed to travel to more than one Job Centre and check other vacancies, and phoning for the information isn't cheap either.

But imagine walking into your local Job Centre to collect your Jobseekers allowance, equipped with a copy of your CV on disk (which was written at your initial interview).

You sit down with your advisor, having scanned the vacancies on the cards near the window and found nothing suitable. But you browse Yahoo! and find details of all the vacancies from every Job Centre in the vicinity and beyond!

If you find one that's relevant, and the advisor emails your CV free of charge. It's cheaper than a phone call and it's all part of the Government's service to reduce unemployment. The Employment Service already lists a limited number of vacancies on its own Web site as an experimental project.

I remember the first time I went looking for a job. Fresh out of school and with a brand new haircut, I trudged the streets from one local employment

agency to another, filling in a variety of confusing forms. At each stop I had to wait hours to be interviewed for just five minutes.

Each of these agencies encouraged me to phone in on a regular basis. Unless you did something to keep yourself at the forefront of their minds, you were unlikely to be put forward for an opportunity – the agency filing system existed mostly in their heads.

But the recruitment industry has changed. Technology has made inroads into the process, saving time and money for the employer and the employee. There's electronic CV scanning, multimedia company presentations and employment sections on most company Web sites. The latter makes it look like you're hard at work when you're on a competitor's site and sending them your CV by email – right under your current employer's nose.

The Internet has improved the speed and the convenience of the recruitment process. If you post a vacancy to Yahoo! shortly after it becomes vacant, you can fill the position in days instead of months. You can also use a comprehensive description of the job, which should reduce the total number of applications.

"Applicants should be self-selecting," says Dave Ferguson, "and the way to do that is to provide them with more information. You shouldn't have to wait until an interview to find out about a company – it should all be on the Internet, including full details of company benefits and the local area." **IM**

An excellent opportunity...

You're responsible for recruitment. You think the Net could save you time and money. So how do you get started?

1 Put more information about your company on your Website

Take a look at your site from the perspective of someone looking for a job. Does it communicate your values? Are there details about company policy and benefits? How about running an online newsletter? Take a look at Tesco for an excellent example (at www.tesco.co.uk).

2 Put vacancies online first

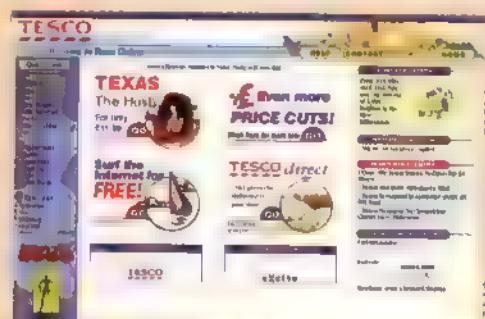
OK, so maybe only computing and high-tech firms have so far benefited from this practice, but what have you got to lose? If you've got a Web site, use it. Take a look at how Skandia Life and the Bank of Ireland have done it (www.skandia.co.uk and www.boi.ie).

3 Choose your job site service carefully

Visit the sites below, check out the offering, and ask for audited audience figures. You don't want hits – you want the number of physical users accessing the site. They all have completely different pricing propositions, some charge you a package fee and others separate the elements.

<http://taps.com>
www.jobbox.net
www.reed.co.uk
www.careermosaic-uk.co.uk
www.jobsite.co.uk
www.monster.co.uk

4 Mix your campaign media
Include your company's URL in your print campaigns as a source for more information. "We advised one



An online newsletter can provide potential employees with a real glimpse into company life – check out Tesco's newsletter at www.tesco.co.uk

company to reduce the size of its printed ads, to a headline for each vacancy and a URL," says Dave Ferguson of 1st-wave.com. "The company was really pleased – without reducing the frequency of its adverts it saved £300,000 on charges and the placement response rate rose by 20 per cent."

5 Appoint a clear champion

Advertising online means you're combining IT and HR departments, so you need to be clear about who'll take responsibility. Larger organisations should appoint a manager with the sole responsibility

for the whole process. You'll get CVs within hours of placing your advert, so you'll have to act quickly.

6 Outsource

Recruitment consultants used to demand big retainer fees for the work they. Internet technology is carving up the process into jobs you do yourself and other aspects you might need help with, so the more enlightened consultancies are prepared to charge on that basis. It's not too expensive to outsource CV scanning, managing the response or psychometric testing, for instance.

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SILVER SURFERS

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the snow in winter? To
session of course. www.hunt.com

In the UK and Ireland, the Internet is still a medium for young people, but there are now clear signs that increasing numbers of citizens are venturing boldly on to the Net.

Maureen Skeoch is 68 years old and was first introduced to the Internet by the charity Age Concern. She has logged on to the Net three times in her life. But she's already hooked and wants to see more of the virtual world.

"You feel you're learning a whole new language with all those wwws! It's a complete revolution," she says. "It makes me think of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*."

Maureen believes many more of her generation will start to use the Internet - once they have overcome their fears of the unfamiliar technology. And if US trends are a signal of things to come, it won't be too long before substantial numbers of the UK's pensioners are making themselves heard in chat rooms across the Web.

In the US, elderly Internet users are merrily logging on to the Net in big numbers, and ISPs are more than willing to give them a helping hand - after all, the market with plenty of leisure time and heaps of cash stashed away for their retirement years.

The market leader, Yahoo, provides a lively guide for 'senior surfers', which encourages them to log on to do the online shopping, check their horoscopes, have a gossip or search for love.

When *Internet Magazine* dropped by to see what the senior surfers were up to, the hot topic being discussed in the heart of the senior club was the *Millennium Bug*. Senior citizens were heatedly discussing their various preparations. The Bug strikes in their own back yard.



Back in the UK, Virgin Net is one of many ISPs quietly preparing for a steady upsurge in senior users. Toby Mason, news producer for Virgin Net's community section, is anticipating a "massive increase" over the next few years.

"The Net is something more elderly people would be interested in if they weren't afraid of the technology," he says. "As the technology simplifies, more of them will go online."

With a shrewd eye for a future revenue stream, Richard Branson's Internet service provides a community section with an over-50s discussion forum. Miles away from Virgin's young and funky Internet HQ, the forum is monitored by Stella Milner, 52, from her home in Burton-on-Trent.

She says: "As people write new messages, I go on and check that there's nothing offensive which might upset anyone. If there is, I have to reject it – it's to protect Virgin Net."

In the UK, more than 11 million people are aged over 55 and many new media commentators believe this substantial and economically powerful section of the population will be vital to the future growth of the Internet.

Stella is already noticing a steady increase in the number of messages in Virgin's forum. "I'm getting quite a few messages now," she says. "I did 16 yesterday and 34 today."

According to top Internet pollster, Fletcher Research, the UK's elderly population isn't rushing online in greater numbers because of a lack of Net access and insufficient training opportunities.

To improve this, charities are now working in a concerted and strategic way to make the Web more accessible to older people by providing them with opportunities to become active and involved participants in the wired world.

'wrinklies' and can get quite abusive. It has become a problem for us and we often have to call upon the chat room's moderator."

But supporters of the senior surfer population are fighting back. The holiday company for the elderly, SAGA, has started running ad campaigns on search engines, and runs computer confidence-building courses at many universities across the country to equip older people for the digital age.

"The Internet is clearly a public domain," says a SAGA spokesman, "Why should there be any Internet ageism? The view that the Web is only for young people is becoming increasingly out of date."

In the long term, the Internet can wipe out much of society's prejudice against older people, particularly in the job market. If an older person can work from home, using Internet technology, age is less likely to affect their employment prospects. Their work will be judged on its merits.

Advertisers are naturally eager to tap into the 'grey pound', and Web design agencies, such as London's Red Snapper – which has worked with

ICL says the desire for government to use the Internet to promote greater interactivity between itself and its older citizens is common across the world, and the company is working on similar projects with the governments of South Africa and Finland.

Lottery money is also playing its part in encouraging senior citizens to log on. Mike Williams, 62, a retired further education lecturer, successfully applied for a lottery grant through Help the Aged and is now running his own Internet training courses for the over-50s at his local library in Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex.

He started last November and expects to have trained 300 people – including job seekers – by the end of the year, which is when the money runs out. He has found genuine enthusiasm for the Internet among the local population and recalls one 90 year old gentleman battling through the snow in the winter just for the chance to attend a training session.

"The response has been fantastic," he says. "It's been a real eye-opener. The older age group shouldn't be written off. They're just as capable of building Internet skills as anyone else."

In his demonstration he shows his mature students how to book tickets on the Web, how to look up information in the online version of Yellow Pages, and useful basics such as handling a search engine and where to put the address in the browser software.

"Most people in retirement have got hobbies," says Mike. "The Web can help them to pursue those interests. Email helps them to keep in touch and opens up new contacts around the world. As they become more elderly and infirm, the Internet becomes an opportunity for them to open doors and windows to the outside world that were previously restricted."

Personal finance is likely to be another crucial influence over the next few years in defining Internet uptake by the elderly. And recent developments such as Barclays offering free Internet access with online banking and stockbroking services are likely to have a positive effect, particularly the opportunities for share-dealing at home, over your own computer.

The industry must continue to simplify access to encourage the older generation. "The Web is a lot harder to use than a video recorder," says an Internet analyst for Fletcher Research. "But it will improve over time."

If it does, more older people can enjoy the same experience as 68 year old Maureen Skeoch, and they might even teach younger browsers a thing or two. "My son doesn't know half the things I know about the Internet," she says. "It's opening up a completely new world for me."

IM

"You feel you're learning a whole new language with all those wwws! It's a complete revolution."

Age Resource (the younger arm of Age Concern) has opened a virtual cafe, called the Baby Boomer Bistro (at www.babyboomerbistro.org.uk), where senior citizens can meet online, get gardening tips and spiritual counselling, and find opportunities to take up voluntary work. Designed to appeal to the post-war generation, this virtual cafe initiative is intended to eliminate the fear that most older people say they have about the Internet. Some have reported that they find email scary because it works so much quicker than anything they've encountered before.

The manager of Age Resource, Sandie Huntington, says: "A lot of older people are intrigued by the Internet. But they don't know who to ask about it. Most of them have been introduced to it by their children and grandchildren. But they're reluctant to go into high street Internet cafes to find out more because they're concerned about looking foolish."

The Cyberia cafe in London says the number of elderly visitors is on the increase. "We get a reasonable number of older people coming in," says a spokesman for the cafe. "Most of them want to keep in touch with their family by free email. But the kind of music we play isn't always to their taste."

Radio One has given Age Resource's cafe the big thumbs up. "It's fantastic news," says a spokeswoman for the station. "If the older generation has the opportunity to use the Internet, they should. The Internet has nothing to do with age."

But in reality, some older people can face unpleasant discrimination when they go onto the Web. "When we're in a chat room, we have a laugh," says Virgin Net's Stella Milner, whose online companions are mostly in their 60s. "The people I've found are generally friendly. But I'm afraid the younger ones do sometimes come in and spoil it. They call us



The Baby Boomer Bistro is designed to appeal to the post-war generation

The Government, with encouragement from Tony Blair, is spearheading an initiative called Better Government for Older People. As part of the scheme, IT giant ICL, in consultation with local authorities, is looking at how Internet technology can be developed in this country to provide elderly people with news and information about pensions, benefits and early retirement. Pilot studies are underway in Bolton, Devon and Newcastle.



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Baby, you can drive my car

In the summer, there always seems to be more learner drivers on the road. But now there's a way for learners to avoid the impatience of other drivers. Just get along to the BSM site – you'll find tutorials on every aspect of driving, as well as the latest BSM deals. You can also book some lessons online. But the best feature is the theory test. This piece of Shockwave gives you 35 questions from the Highway Code and you have to get a minimum of 30 right to pass. It's also free, which is more than can be said for the DoT site.

www.bsm.co.uk

Money, money, money. Must be funny... Anyway, in the virtual world of the Net money's a serious business. And to prove it, there are a number of top sites that'll help you manage your finances.

First up is Money Extra, a joint venture between Microsoft Money (www.microsoft.com/uk/homepc/money) and The Exchange. It's a personal finance site designed to help you make better decisions about your money. Everything from mortgages to ISAs are compared using a massive database of financial products.

www.moneyextra.com



Endsleigh, when it's not sponsoring football divisions, is offering some of its policies over the Web. The site is aimed at the younger end of the market, offering products such as group travel insurance, contents insurance for shared houses and student possessions insurance.

www.endsleigh.co.uk

your leading independent financial comparisons on the Web



One site that takes a less po-faced approach to finance is The Motley Fool. It covers a multitude of topics, from women's investment, through tax and National Insurance, to historical features on great financial disasters.

www.fool.co.uk

Reckon all the comedy on TV is rubbish? Think you could do better? Well, your boat's just come in. The Beeb has launched a new section of its popular Comedy Zone site called the The Write Stuff. It's the official home of the BBC Comedy Script Unit and is divided into sections aimed at helping budding writers and pros alike.

www.comedyzone.bbc.com/writestuff

If you're short of a joke or two, you might want to pop along to The Fabulous Bakin' Boys site. Stop me if you've

heard this one, but the online muffin maker has just launched a new site with over 1,000 jokes, most of which are actually funny. As a bonus, the only cookies you'll find here are the edible kind.

www.bakinboys.co.uk

At the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour on 11 August, the last eclipse of the 20th century takes place in the UK. The path of totality will only be crossing Cornwall and Devon. But never fear, the Net is here, and Eclipse 99 will tell you everything you need to know.

www.eclipse99.co.uk

The official site for the 1999 eclipse is up and running. You can get advice on eclipse watching and even buy the T-shirt.

www.eclipse.org.uk

The BBC has an excellent set of

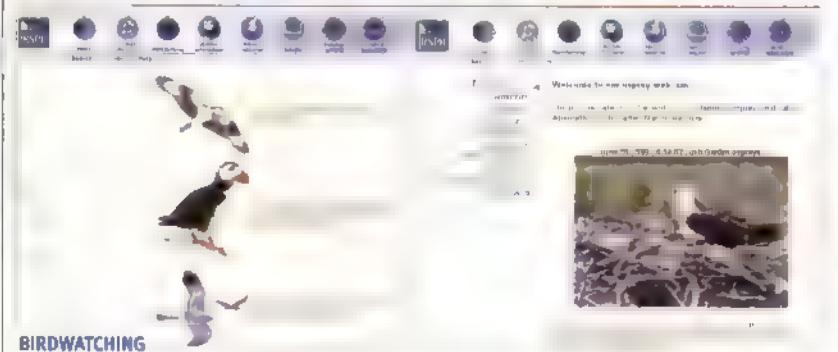


pages dedicated to the eclipse that are well worth a look – if only for the link to its weather page, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/sci_tech/specials/eclipse_99/default.htm

FESTIVAL REVUE

If watching the titanic dance of celestial bodies ain't your thang, this festival site might suit you better. It'll be carrying the best news, reviews and live video from artists at this year's Edinburgh Festival.

www.festivalrevue.com



Get yourself a bird's-eye view

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has launched a trio of Web cams to help twitchers get the best bird action on the Net. The images all come from closed circuit video cameras in the RSPB's visitor centres at three nature reserves. Without stirring from your home, you'll be able to catch a glimpse of British seabirds, such as guillemots, razorbills or puffins on the seabird cliffs at South Stack. Ospreys and one of the UK's rarest birds of prey, the harrier, are only a click away.

www.rspb.org.uk/webcams

BIRDWATCHING

eyor

phone calls are expensive. So save time and this month's essential sites



FOOD

Don't play with your food, unless...

The vegetarian answer to Peparmi, Cheestrings, has launched a new site positively brimming with games. In the cheesily-named Timeraider (geddit?), the yellow hero - Mr Strings - must negotiate several different levels to retrieve lost time. This will definitely help while away a few hours, and when you're done, there's a whole archive of other games that the site's developed for you to try, including Cheestrek and The Peeler. It might not be a bit of an animal, but it's a bit of alright.

www.cheestrings.co.uk

But if fringe

theatre leaves you cold, maybe you'll warm to the idea of hugging a tree. The Woodland Trust's site could be just the place for you. You'll find woods to visit, and how to get involved by planting a tree or making a donation.

www.woodland-trust.org.uk

One thing you might associate with these sunny days of August is pubs. And JD Wetherspoons, which

owns more than its fair share, has just gone online. But don't expect pub games and beer-related jiggery pokery. Oh no. This is a serious recruitment site

showing all the benefits you receive if you become one of its publicans. But it's a bit dry for a pub.

www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk

Cuppa load of this. What better way to unwind and slake your thirst than with a bag of leaves dunked in boiling water? And if that's not enough, you can visit Maurice or the Gaffer of the Tetley Tea Folk. I've never seen the attraction of



these irritating little so-and-sos myself, but if you're into collecting them, this site's for you. A la storm in a tea cup, if you ask me.

www.teafolk.com

If tea isn't your, um, cup of tea, then maybe you're into health and fitness. If so, check out PPP Healthcare's recently-launched site. Here you'll find a host of printable fact sheets on topics ranging from acne and breastfeeding



www.internet-magazine.com

Why do they do that?



As if Netheads don't have a hard enough time of it when it comes to their reputation with women, along comes Refresh - an

online magazine. Not only does it recommend the Robin Cook guide to seduction, but you can also try your hand at virtual flirting. You get three girls to chat up and a list of lines to use. The idea is to score points and score with the girls. We managed a rockin' 25 out of 30, so watch out, ladies.

www.refresh-net.com



If you've always thought you could run a country better than any politician, how about setting up a micronation? Just declare independence and set up a nation of one on the Web. To see how it's done, pop along to this portal. From here, you can visit the Empire of Aeldarian ("a small independent nation... surrounded on all sides by the United States"), Scotland (sic), Oceania or even The Kingdom of EnenKio, which has a king, a government of six and even an island it's disputing with the US government. Bonkers.

<http://members.tripod.com/rittergeist>

If you're fed up with all the *Phantom Menace*, *Austin Powers* and *Eyes Wide Shut* hype, boy have we got a site for you. Trailervision

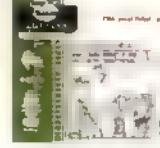


produces teaser trailers for all those films that have never been made because people like the trailer more than the movie. Highlights include

When the Moon Attacks 2000, *Election Day* and *Y2K*. Some of these ideas will be picked up by Hollywood, I guarantee.

www.trailervision.com

This is a Web-based cartoon strip about a toy train enthusiast and his model layout. Sounds rubbish, doesn't it? Well, you'll be pleasantly surprised. Following the sad demise of Calvin



and Hobbes, this could be cartooning at its best.

www.toytrunkrailroad.com

to tonsil tis and vasectomy.

www.ppphealthcare.co.uk

And finally,

if health and

fitness is

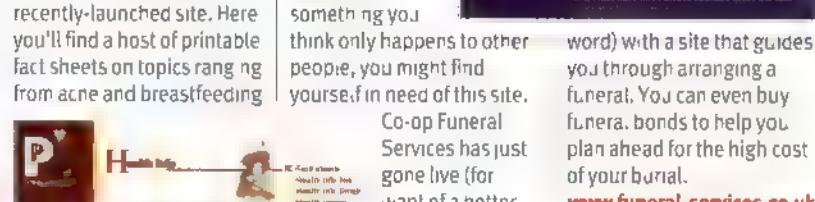
something you

think only happens to other people, you might find yourself in need of this site.

Co-op Funeral Services has just gone live (for want of a better

word) with a site that guides you through arranging a funeral. You can even buy funeral bonds to help you plan ahead for the high cost of your burial.

www.funeral-services.co.uk



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SPOTLIGHT ON...

A new dimension

The Web's 3D technology lets you fly around the Millennium Dome, check out your holiday destination and visit the world's finest shops. **Paul Bennett** takes a virtual tour of the Net

We've viewed objects in three dimensions on a screen since the amusement console games of the '80s, with classics such as 3D Tank Command. Things are rather more sophisticated today, with multiple-player online shoot-em-ups, such as Quake and Duke Nukem, taking the gaming community by storm.

On the Web, adding a 3D browsing capacity to your site has business, as well as entertainment, implications. Estate agents can let their customers view properties from the outside and then step inside, sit in an armchair and even rearrange the furniture.

The appropriate acronym to use at Internet parties is VRML. It stands for Virtual Reality Modelling Language, which is what programmers use to develop virtual 3D worlds. But just like HTML, you don't have to know what it is to enjoy its benefits.

To successfully navigate through a VRML world, you'll need to 3D-enable your browser. There's a host of 3D technologies on the market, but the one that's attracted the most attention comes from UK-based Superscape. Its Viscape software lets you view two of the most common file formats for Web-based interactive 3D (VRML97 and SVR files).

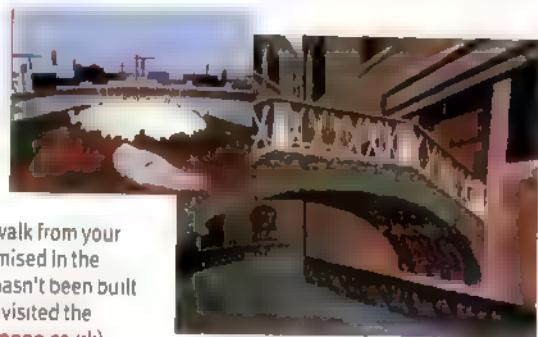
You can download Viscape free from Superscape's Web site (at www.superscape.com). Installation is easy and automatic – as an Active X control for Internet Explorer or as a plug-in for Netscape Navigator.

The earlier incarnations of Viscape let you navigate 3D worlds and zoom in on specific objects, and this is adequate for many 3D worlds. But buoyed by more processor power and recent updates (we're now up to version 5.61), images now benefit from texture

Virtual travel

The travel industry has been encouraged by the potential of 3D technology, and has already used VRML to offer virtual city tours. You can familiarise yourself with the city and take the "five minute walk from your hotel to the beach," that's promised in the brochure. And what if the city hasn't been built yet? Millions of Net users have visited the Millennium Dome (www.dome2000.co.uk) without going anywhere near it.

The Millennium Experience provides breathtaking views of the Dome. You can choose to walk, take a boat trip or fly past the Dome at day or night. The replica was drawn from the original architectural blueprints, so the experience on the site is extremely realistic. There have also been some updates to the Viscape technology since the Millennium Experience was Site of the Month in our March issue.



www.intel.com/cpc/explore/stonehenge/index.htm

Travel further afield, and you can take a quick sojourn to Virtual Venice where you're treated to an exquisite gondola tour of the city.

www.intel.com/cpc/explore/venice/index.htm

Or stroll through the streets of Cy-Berlin with a whistlestop tour. The traffic looks real enough – and true to life – but it won't stop when you walk out in front of it.

www.cyberlin.de/intro/new_intro.htm

Slightly less exotic, but still open for viewing, are the Sloane offices of Anite Systems.

www.anitesystems.co.uk/offices/vroffice_frames.htm

It's not just modern architecture that benefits from a 3D walkthrough, though. You can trace the history of Stonehenge and glimpse what the future holds for these 10,000 year old stone circles.



projection. This means that the external environment can directly affect the 3D world. So if you're online, driving along Hollywood Boulevard, and it starts raining, not only can you flip up your soft-top roof, you can also see the rain reflected in your eight-spoke chrome wheels. It's all clever stuff and is demonstrated in Virtual Venice (www.intel.com/cpc/explore/virtualvenice/index.htm).

VRML can also be used for serious training and simulation. The type of 3D technology that's used for tank driver and pilot training is now being used to educate learner drivers. Buckle up with The British School of Motoring (BSM) before embarking on the virtual reality driving test. It's similar to amusement arcade driving games, where you can navigate from the steering wheel or from behind the car. There's

also room for commercial pursuits on the site. One 'mission' is to make it to the local Vauxhall dealership.

[www.bsm.co.uk/theory/theoryvr.htm](http://www.bsm.co.uk/theory/theoryvr/html/theoryvr.htm)

When you've passed that test, how about moving on to captain a motor launch and start messing about on the river? You can familiarise yourself with boating navigation lights at www.localnet.com/~urquhart/vboats.html



Plaza Royal

The developments in 3D technology have caught the eye of companies looking to promote e-commerce. Plaza Royal is a virtual shopping complex filled with 'many of the world's finest products'. It only opened recently, which explains the number of vacant lots. But there's chrome, glass, fountains, and the ubiquitous burger joint, which is poised and open for orders. A multilingual interface opens the revolving door to more punters, and an exchange tool can automatically convert credit card purchases to dollars.

www.plazaroyal.com/plaza.htm

VRML can even save you money. The Energy Saving Trust claims you can cut £200 from your fuel bills. Its site demonstrates the latest energy-saving technologies and advocates an open-door policy to visitors. Simply let yourself into its virtual reality home and click on hot-looking objects to see how they're integrated into the Energy Efficiency campaign.

www.est.org.uk/superscape/index.htm

VRML also has its lighter side, as the *Daily Star* demonstrates. Its MegaStar site is set in a virtual pub – the Boozah. You can stagger helplessly between a selection of popular modes and steady yourself against the bar with an auto-horizontal button.

www.megastar.co.uk

Gone are the lager-fuelled days at Arsenal FC, but you can still follow in the 3D footsteps of heroes like

leading lights. The site is a virtual version of the recently opened exhibition at County Hall in London. You can choose from five 360° panorama player



profiles and even perform a celebratory 360° back-flip.

www.hall-of-fame.co.uk/football/index.html

Germany has gone one better. Its colossal 506k file produces a multi-user football game – 3D-Soccer. Players can play in teams



Bergkamp and Overmars and grace the marble halls. You can even run out onto the hallowed turf – if you run up to the video screens you'll see a giant Ian Wright grinning at you. This really is virtual reality.

www.arsenal.co.uk

The Football Association is celebrating the history of English football and honouring some of its

against each other, as well as in leagues run by the site. Click on *Spiele* (play) to compete against teams from all over the world



Another world

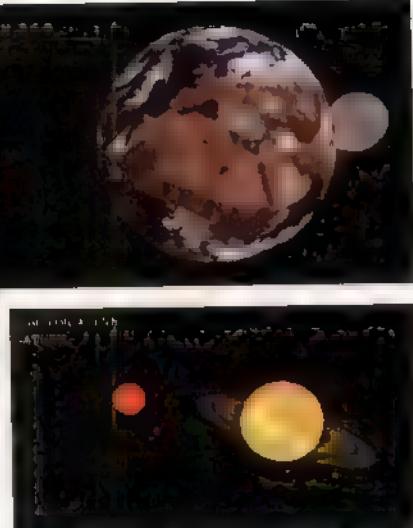


The *National Geographic* is trying to fit the entire solar system onto your 14-inch monitor. It's the first SVR-based Web page to win the coveted Cool Site of the Day (www.coolisiteoftheday.com) award. Virtual Solar System is a glorious example of 3D in action. Images of the Earth and Moon come courtesy of NASA. It's enough to drive Patrick Moore into apoplexy. You can zoom in on the Polar Cap and Pathfinder landing site on Mars – check out the plate tectonics, life-giving waters and surface features on Earth. You can even scan the surface of the Sun for black spots. It's all here.

www.nationalgeographic.com/solarsystem/ax/high.html

Many of the advanced features, including the high rendering, are designed to work with today's fast PCs with 3D accelerator graphics cards. If you have an older PC, you can still enjoy these worlds, but some of the features might be slower. The identity of the major backers behind Viscape come as no surprise. You can look at the domain names on some of these sites for a clue. Intel is using the best Viscape designs as a Web showcase for its more powerful processor chips, as Colin Greene, strategic software technology manager for Intel (Northern Europe), admits: "JPEGs and animated GIFs just don't cut it any more," he argues. And he has a point!

www.intel.com



If you download the 269k Paraworld Viscape extension (www.paraworld.com), you're invited to a 3D chat world to talk tactics before heading on to the field for the online game. One piece of advice before you kick off – turn your speaker down when you enter the site, because the noise can be deafening as you jog onto the pitch.

www.ran.de/cgi/fm/pub/fun/soccer

Some of the most popular games and toys have been given a whole new lease of life with a 3D Web view.

Nearly two decades since finding a place in every household, the Rubik's Cube is back. Playing is a bit fiddly, but it's worth stopping here for a demonstration of smoothly rendered 3D.

www.com/3dpages/worlds/cube/3dpage.htm

You can also test your skill with a game of online darts. Click on the dart to change your throwing angle and click on the board to throw. The site will even

calculate your score while you're playing.

www.com/3dpages/worlds/darts/3dpage.htm

At the other end of the pub sits Virtua Niner. It's an online variant of billiards, where you have to shoot

even a ball's eye view of the pocket as the ball is sunk.

www.diestadt.net/Vniner/vniner_frame.asp

Handy Tip

If you have any trouble with Viscape, try Superscape's



nine balls into the pockets as fast as you can. Play from one of two viewpoints – as an observer or from the view of the white ball (this method is recommended). There's

[Navigation-Bar-Help.com](http://www.Navigation-Bar-Help.com)

Click-and-drag the icons on the navigation bar to move



3D benchmark (www.3dbenchmark.com). Click on the link to open a new window. This takes a snapshot of your system (so close your other programs before you start) and runs a test on your machine. Depending on your machine and the speed of your Internet connection, you can alter the graphic detail to high, medium or low and see how it runs.



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YOUR INTERNET PRESENCE IS YOUR REPUTATION

SITE OF THE MONTH

Dotty about music

Music on the Internet is big business. So how did a traditional trade publication become the busiest music Web site in the UK? Richard Dinnick gets down to the online beat of dotmusic

Take one trade publication aimed at people within the music industry. Give it demand for a Web presence because of the growth of music on the Net. It doesn't sound all that appealing, does it? Well, I think again, because, boy, is this exciting.

Dotmusic is officially the busiest music Web site in the UK. Its first ABC electronic audit has confirmed its incredible success. Over 260,000 people visit the site on a monthly basis, requesting nearly seven million pages.

"We've used our unprecedented access to give music fans an insider's guide to music," explains Chris Sice, the site's commercial manager. "Popularity has continued to increase and traffic has gone through the roof." And it really has.

Site Of The Month

dotmusic

Designers

Miller Freeman
"The site was designed in-house by our eccentric Swedish designer, Ola Turesson."

Development time

The most recent relaunch took over a year.

Development costs

Original site cost Miller Freeman £5,000 in 1995. "This has been one of the highest costs we have incurred since our launch." Now it's impossible to say as all programming, design and interactive features have been developed in-house.

URL

www.dotmusic.co.uk

Increasing from 1.5 million page impressions in December 1998 to nine million in June this year.

You've come a long way

It's easy to see how this excellent site has become a firm favourite with music fans on the Net. Dotmusic is divided into six clearly defined sections that deal with news, arts, reviews, dance music, the charts and online shopping. Each of these areas is thorough, with every angle and topic covered in a depth you won't usually find on the Internet.

Clear navigation is permanently situated on the left-hand side of the page. When you select one of the six sections, a new list appears below – this looks like the nested folders on your hard disk, which makes the site feel familiar and friendly.

The design is clean, with no extraneous gimmicks or annoying gizmos to distract you. There's an average of only one image per page, which means you don't have to wait too long for the pages to download.

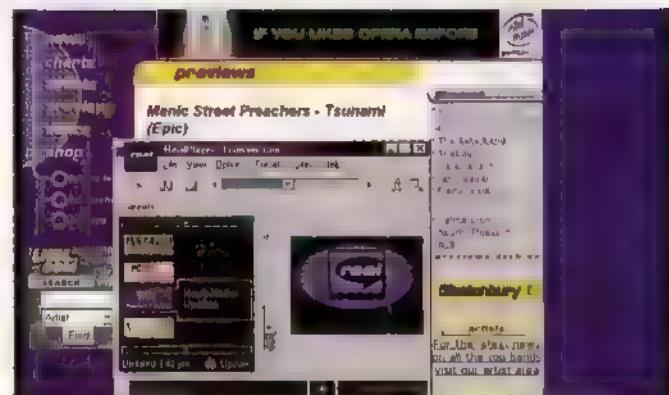
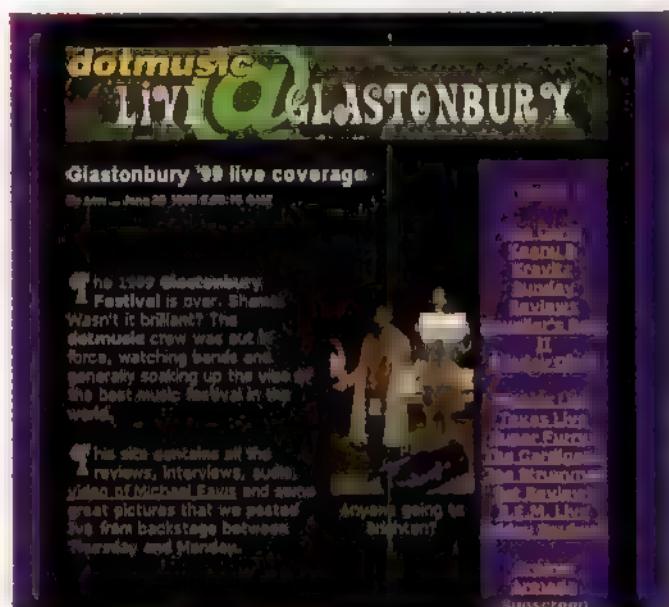
Version 2.0

A year ago, the site was targeted at the industry, not the man on the street. Dotmusic is an excellent example of a Web site that was meant to act as an online brand extension, but it's gone on to develop a persona of its own.

"In 1995, dotmusic launched as the online version of *Music Week* – a traditional music magazine," explains Sice. "We found, almost immediately, that the site was incredibly popular with music fans who were fascinated by our behind the scenes approach.

"We decided that, rather than dribble new services onto the site, we would delay many of them and re-launch with a completely new emphasis." The site's producer, Ben Drury, went to the US to learn more about userability and content publishing issues.

The parent company, Miller Freeman, also carried out research to find out what visitors to the site



dotmusic had six people reporting live from Glastonbury (top). You can read reviews of the latest releases and listen to short clips of your favourite artist

wanted. "From being an industry site, we became a consumer-driven site overnight – one that truly exploits the interactive capabilities of the Net," says Sice.

Life thru a lens

In keeping with this ethos, the site sends outside broadcast teams armed with Web cams, digital cameras and a host of computer hardware to events like the Homelands Dance festival (www.dotmusic.com/homelands/default.asp) and Glastonbury (www.dotmusic.com/glastonbury).

Next up will be T in the Park, the Eclipse and the Reading festival.

"We covered Glastonbury with a specially designed area dedicated to the festival," explains Martin Worcester, one of the writers who attended the event. "A team of six people went to the festival to report live on the music. The idea was to try to convey a sense of what it was like to be there."

To do this, dotmusic provided visitors with photos, video, audio interviews and vox pops from revellers. Those who couldn't make it to the small market town 'n



The HIT machine mixes audio clips with on-screen reviews – you're taken to the next review after 30 seconds

Somerset could email the journalists with their questions and join in the special chats.

"The news isn't updated to the same extent as festival coverage," Sice stresses. "If we did in fact from 8am until 1am, it'd finish the guys off!" The news is updated every day. Unusually, Sunday is the busiest day of the week because the charts are released. Then there's news that comes from the 'inside track'..

"The benefit of working alongside an industry magazine is that we get that 'inside track' on breaking news," Sice says. And to cement this crossover, *Music Week's* A&R editor, Stephen Jones, will be dividing his time equally between the trade publication and the populist Web site.

One successful example of this crossover was the recent interview with Robbie Williams. Sice takes up the story: "Music Week got him two months before he released his new album, I've been expecting you."

Dotmusic was able to tape the interview, ask questions posted by fans and allow people to pre-order the album. It was one month before anyone else got access to Robbie and then he was everywhere."

Equally cursed and blessed

If you're after top chart information, dotmusic provides 16 CIN charts ranging from rock and jazz to country and the official dance industry DJ charts, such as the Urban and Cool Cuts charts which Pete Tong uses on Radio 1 (www.bbc.co.uk/radios1). You can opt to have charts emailed to you as soon as they're published on Sundays.

There are reviews of the latest tracks, so you can get the low-down on whether the new Britney Spears single will be a hit or a disaster. "We're the only UK music site to have blanket licences with four of the five major record companies," says Sice proudly.

Sony, EMI, Warner Brothers and BMG are all on board, and between them they own another 40 labels, such as Virgin, Creation and Columbia. This gives dotmusic exclusive access to music from thousands of bands.

Sice is particularly proud of the Hit machine. This feature mixes audio clips with on-screen reviews. After 30 seconds, it takes you to the next review and clip.

The most successful example of using audio clips to their maximum potential is the special promotion dotmusic did with EMI for the launch of Geri Halliwell's single, *Look at me*.

Chris Sice is keen to distance himself and his site from MP3 – the *bête noire* of the music industry. He believes music download will be a vital breakthrough for the music industry, but he sees MP3 as piracy made easy and he won't countenance it on his site.

"While other music sites have just uploaded music without permission, we feel it's vital to protect artists' copyright," he says adamantly. "We've sat down with the record companies and hammered out a deal that lets us add short clips to the site to promote their acts."

This is my truth, tell me yours

These licences mean you can listen to 30-second audio clips of songs from – among others – Madonna,

What the professionals think

Graham Brown, senior designer, Masterbyte

It arrives minus the pomp, with no frames, flashy links, gaudy graphics or any vaguely suspicious Internet awards – dotmusic oozes class. It's bright, breezy, fast-loading and easy to read. When I tried the search facility by typing in "Travis" (a new Scottish band), I was presented with truckloads of information. This is the Internet at its best. Simple, packed full of information, with classic default colour hyperlinks. This site would please both Tim Berners-Lee and Tim Rice!

www.masterbyte.co.uk

Paul Baillie, creative director, Motion Pixels

The dotmusic site is a good example of a big idea that's been well executed. It gives you quick, clear routes through to your chosen content. It's also packed with news, reviews and features, and is a comprehensive source of information and interaction for many types of music fans. But for a site that's so nicely designed using intelligent navigation, it's a shame it lets itself down by the hosting and the choice of Windows NT as the operating platform.

www.motionpixels.co.uk

the Chemical Brothers, the Backstreet Boys and Jamiroquai.

In the Artists section of the site you'll find a searchable A-Z database and a series of features. One personal touch is the artist areas, which have been given nicknames. For instance, the A1 Saints can be found on The A1 Saints Road page and fans of Aqua can visit the Aqua Aquarium.

The idea behind the Artists' pages was to create communities for the site's 14 to 24 year old target audience. Dotmusic not only gives you up to the minute news and the latest releases and interviews, but

also the chance to chat with people who like the same music. "The community aspect of our site has really taken off," says Worcester. You can even visit the site's dedicated shopping channel, where you'll find over 250,000 CDs and videos courtesy of online retailer MVS (www.mvs.com).

Now that's what I call music

Douglas Adams has been quoted as saying that he looks forward to the day when he won't notice the technology on the Net. Dotmusic is a big step towards this – it's just effortless. One fan described going to dotmusic as like 'getting a backstage pass to a gig'.

Sice puts the site's success down to the fan-like enthusiasm his team has for the job. "We work for a large media company, but we've adopted a back bedroom publishing approach based on a passion for music and people working their arses off." And that's the bottom line.

Steve Barnes, sales & marketing manager, Imaginet

The site is colourful and informative, but it has far too many navigational options. Dotmusic seems to have hit the mark with the left-hand frame navigation and should have perhaps stuck with this approach on the right. Top marks for the research, content and use of ASP-driven pages. But the endless scrolling might upset browsers and advertisers alike by the time you reach the bottom. Overall it's a nice site – hopefully it'll be developing all the time, so watch this space.

www.imaginet.co.uk

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BEHIND THE SCENES...

Top sites for August

Experts tell us how this month's top sites were built. Get the lowdown on the products webmasters use, the inside track on site budgets and tips on how to use the latest technologies

The World of Beatrix Potter

From cabbage patch to Web site, the popularity of Peter Rabbit and Mrs Tiggy-Winkle continues unbounded

Since their appearance at the beginning of the century, Beatrix Potter's anthropomorphic animal characters have continued to enchant children. And there can be few homes where the kids don't own at least one of the familiar books, toys or other accessories. And now the Beatrix Potter site looks set to become a favourite too.

Originally set up three years ago, the official Beatrix Potter Web site has been relaunched with beautifully reproduced (if slightly faint) illustrations and greater interactivity. Thoroughly redeveloped by K-Web (UK), the site is well thought out and has the feel of a theme park.

The opening map sets the tone by introducing the characters. On mouseover, each one displays its own pop-up site area. The lively and colourful design perfectly echoes Potter's books and children will easily find their way around.

You can visit Mrs Tiggy-Winkle to hear the stories told online, or play interactive games with the mischievous Tom Kitten. And if grown-ups feel this is all a bit too twee, a Beatrix Potter biography makes sure they're not left out.

Even the potentially slow download time is offset by a picture of Peter Rabbit above a polite note reading 'Loading data, please be patient'.

Other areas feature clips from the range of animated videos and CD-ROMs. Parents might also want to do their wallets before visiting the Peter Rabbit gift shop with its online shopping facility.

It might not replace the books or stuffed toys in your child's affections, but this site's a charming place to visit. *Mark Whitehead*
www.peterrabbit.com



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www.peterrabbit.com

Design ★★★★
Content ★★★

ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY?

Teletubbies www.bbc.co.uk/education/teletubbies/tubbies.htm
Thomas the Tank Engine www.thomasthetankengine.com
Bagpuss http://ds.ds1.dl.pipex.com/nigel_baker/bagpuss

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF PETER RABBIT AND FRIENDS



The 24 Hour Museum

The online gateway to the UK's cultural attractions

Funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the 24 Hour Museum aims to provide easy access to UK museums, galleries and heritage attractions.

The project team was led by Loyd Grossman and Ylva French of The Campaign for Museums (www.museumsweek.co.uk), and the site combines database information on 2,000 museums and galleries.

But it's more than a glorified search engine. "This is an inspirational, promotional and informative Web site," says Jennie Bond from the Campaign for Museums. "It's intended to promote rather than replace museum visiting. Visitors could discover places to visit that they didn't know about."

"The approach was also to produce a site with strong visual appeal," adds Bond. It has a crisp, clean design that doesn't rely on extra technology to deliver content. There's a museum finder, resources page,

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

A novel feature of the site is the Scrapbook, a small download to organise and manage your bookmarks. Built using Zoneware from Diverse Interactive (www.diverse.co.uk), the program allows subject-based navigation. You can annotate links, organise them in folders, and

publish them to a Web server so that others can use them. It comes with loads of museum-related bookmarks, and you can add new URLs direct from your browser.

downloadable information packs, magazine, and children's section. There are also 'trails' to help you follow special interests.

To date, response from visitors has been positive, and in May the DCMS designated the site as a *bona fide* national museum. *Steve Edwards*

www.24hourmuseum.org.uk

Design ★★★★
Content ★★★★

MORE EXHIBITIONISTS

Art Guide www.artguide.org
Museum Net www.museums.co.uk
Museums Association www.museumassociation.org

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?



One of the best areas of the site is Jemima Puddleduck's Greetings Cards, which lets you send online animated salutations. K-Web used Flash to bring Beatrix Potter's illustrations to life

and Fireworks to get the illustrations down to a manageable size without losing quality. Clare Wilkinson, K-Web project manager, says "It's easy to go mad with Flash and have everything animated, but we were aware that the site was there to add to the user's experience, rather than that of the developer."





Tango

Bold, mischievous, subversive, and quintessentially British, the Tango experience hits the Web

Renowned for its quirky and surreal approach, Tango is keen to make an impact with its revitalised Web site. "Although well-produced, the previous site's subject matter and humour was slightly off the mark, and wasn't really fitting in with what Tango was about," comments David Streek from Deepend Design, the company behind the Tango site's facelift.

Re-launched at the end of April, content is currently a little sparse, but two major new sections are in development. You can listen to several Tango radio adverts, download a QuickTime version of the latest TV advert, and brighten up your desktop with a screensaver. But the main focus of the site is its downloadable video game, with its linked weekly competitions.

If you're a fan of the Tango sense of humour, you can also use the search engine to visit a random comedy site – picked from the best on the Web. The object is to provide fans with a 'Tangoesque' experience, encourage community through content and gaming, and create an environment in which the Gotan (the infamous orange Tango doll) can exist.

The enhanced version of the site uses a lot of Shockwave technology, but the emphasis is on presentation. "Using Shockwave doesn't always imply that the site is bigger and slower," Streek explained.

Ultimately, Tango's strategy is to exist as a content provider, rather than as a corporate advertiser with a homepage. "Coca-Cola and Pepsi are American, and concentrate heavily on music as a pull," Streek concludes.



CLICK HERE

Top marks for favourite sites

If you've tried to mix your Netscape bookmarks with your IE favourites, you'll know it isn't easy. Well, now there's a new Web-based bookmark service which will let you import both from your browsers into one place on the Net. With Cool Sync, you not only have access to your favourites on your usual computer, but potentially on any PC anywhere – from a public library in Peckham to an

Internet café in Indonesia. It also means you can synchronise your home and work bookmarks and use the service as a back-up in case your computer crashes. www.coolsync.com

"Tango is British and very proud of it, and the site stands alone in that it's quirky, humorous and has one of the best games around."

Steve Edwards

www.tango.co.uk

Design **★★★**

Content **★★★**

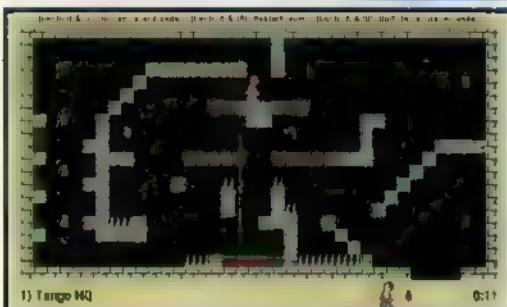
SODA STREAM

7up www.7up.com

Coke www.coca-cola.com

Pepsi www.pepsiworld.com

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?



The most innovative element of the site is the Gotan Goes Fizzy game, created in Director and influenced by games such as Manic Miner. With more than 40 levels, progress is only possible using power-ups, activated by codes released online each week. High scores can be submitted, and weekly prizes are awarded to 10 entrants picked at random from the top 100. "The age of retro gaming was one that Britain ruled, producing many of today's best programmers and designers," says Streek. "The style of the game really appeals to consumers in their late twenties and upwards who owned those early machines."

Carlsberg

The age-old love affair between lager and football continues online

The new Carlsberg site, aimed at young men, lager drinkers and football fans, was relaunched in May to appeal to younger adult drinkers and the established young adult audience on the Web.

"The previous offering was not building excitement and involvement with the brand," explains Richard Hedges from AKQA, the company behind the face lift. But beware – you'll need plug-ins to enjoy the site to its fullest. "The successful communication of the brand is not about technology," Hedges is quick to point out, "it's about ideas."

There's a mass of information on offer, from the company's origins and product line-up through to the relaunch of the brand in 1996. You can even download some of the classic Carlsberg television commercials.

And despite letting you check out the top 40 singles, the site's definitely football-centric. In the Boot Room you can learn various football tricks such as the legendary Cruyff turn, with video footage provided by Coerver Coaching (www.coerver-coaching.com). Or you can download official



Liverpool or England screensavers to brighten up your desktop.

You'll also find details of major football fixtures, plenty of competitions, and occasional opportunities to chat with football heroes online. For the completist, there's even an online catalogue which lets you order football kit or book a flight for a virtual European fixture.

Brand loyalty and image are important, but sites pushing consumer brands are often little more than online ads. Jarringly, won't the site have limited appeal? "At Carlsberg, the user is offered a complete brand experience," counters Hedges, "with interactive and involving content relevant to their sponsorship properties." So maybe it is an ad, but it's a pretty good one.

Steve Edwards



www.carlsberg.co.uk

Design **★★★**

Content **★★★**

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HE DONS HIS HARD HAT, SHUNS HIS FRIED BREAKFAST AND GOES BEHIND THE SCENES TO BRING US THE GOSSIP FROM THE WEB DESIGN INDUSTRY

Getting along like a TeleHouse on fire

Me and my new apprentice, Terry, was over at TeleHouse (whose motto is "continuous availability") the other week, doing a bit of rewiring. One lunchtime we nipped out for a quick cocktail, mussel and eel pie in a traditional East End pub, but when we got back I saw that Terry'd only gone and left the blooming soldering iron on. Seems it had started a bit of a fire, and caused widespread panic in the locals. Thankfully the result wasn't much more than a nasty smell of singed plastic and overheated metal and a bit of fuss over what all companies and ISPs were going to do when people tried to get onto all their sites. So, if any one tells you there was a fire at TeleHouse, you'll know the score...

Miller Freeman checks out the chintz

When I'm not using my carpentry skills to stick up a mock Tudor, half timbered gaff or double-hung windows, I've been known to knock up a quick kitchen chair for Mrs Builder or complete bar area for the front room. So you can imagine my excitement when I was over at Miller Freeman the other day, checking the drip caps. I was outside Candy Stern's office, when I heard her mention that the publisher has given the green light to a new interiors/furniture portal. Furniture UK will be launched at the BFM Summer Furniture Show on 25 August.

When your ISP really is engaged

I've seen some right dodgy bogs in my time - with all the onsite portaloos and all. Well, my mates over at Cannon Hygiene have asked me to get you lot to get your skates on and get along to their site smartish. There'll you'll be able to vote for your favourite convenience. You'll have to act quickly 'cos your last

New Woman

Sex, hugs and sausage rolls – just what every new woman wants from an online magazine

The people at *New Woman* know that recreating a magazine on the Net isn't terribly exciting, so the relaunch of this site is a sign of the mag's commitment to the growing number of women going online.

Any site with a button marked 'sex' on the front page is bound to attract interest. Click on this one and you'll get Bonking Breakthroughs – sizzling sex tips to keep that 'I've just had film sex' feeling in your relationship – and a fair indication of the type of articles on the rest of the site.

"Everyone is talking about how to get women on the Web... The redesign is just the first step in the quest to lead women's Web publishing in the UK," says publishing director Dawn Bebe.

New Woman has had a Web presence for over two years and was the first UK women's mag to go online. But it still isn't doing anything new, although this incarnation is only the first step in the process of responding to the results of a reader survey. "We asked what they wanted, how they use the site, and what they want more of," explains Bebe.

The results showed that women want community and chat, and (obviously) more items like The Todger Test. But women are also results-driven – when they log on, they want to do something specific. The site still has a long way to go before it offers users something significantly different – or useful. In the meantime, why not use this online magazine for a bit of light relief when you're taking a coffee break.

Katherine Harvey

www.newwomanonline.co.uk

Design ★★★
Content ★★★

DARLING, YOU SIMPLY MUST READ...

Cosmopolitan
www.cosmomag.com
Hello www.hello-magazine.co.uk
Elle www.ellemag.com



Citron Press

Cult fiction, freshly squeezed and juicy

If you're a budding author or a fan of new fiction, check out Citron Press – a revolutionary publishing concept dedicated to the promotion of new writing talent. Its patrons include Martin Amis and Lord Archer, but don't let that put you off.

The aims of this site are to sell books and to encourage new authors to submit manuscripts. But to achieve this, Citron's site needed a complete overhaul, so it called in site designers Reading Room. The result is a great site which cost about £5,000.

The benefits to visitors are clear. The site lets you add book reviews or download sample chapters before making purchases from a service supplied by Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk). It's a clean design with minimal download times and simple navigation. The site is branded with citrus fruits, inspired by Citron's corporate identity.

And Citron is happy with the results, and not only with the user-friendly site. "Reading Room, understanding our need for constant updating, has designed a brilliant admin area that lets my team update and alter information quickly," says Nikki Connors at Citron.

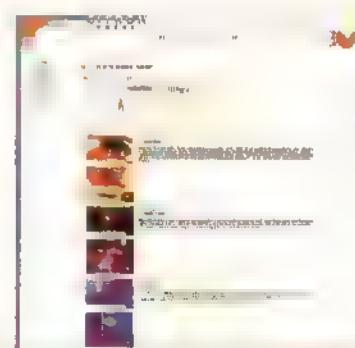
Fans of creative literature and cool Web design will be impressed. *Elaine Hernen*

www.citronpress.co.uk

Design ★★★★
Content ★★★★

READING MATTERS

The Women's Press
www.the-womens-press.com
Penguin
www.penguin.co.uk
Random House
www.randomhouse.co.uk



HOW DO THEY DO THAT?



Allaire's (www.allaire.com) Cold Fusion technology let Citron keep the site updated while the databases were developed in MS Access. The search facility uses both SQL (www.sql.com) to process database fields, and Verity97 for free text searches. Citron wanted visitors who register to be greeted by name and offered the latest books available in their chosen genre. Again, this was achieved by using Cold Fusion. Cookies are also used, but if users have set their browsers to refuse cookies, clever manipulation of the site's database takes over. The visitor then receives news items and suitable book recommendations.

Daily Server

Tuesday 17th March 2004

45Mbps

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ridiculous speed limits!

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*Offer runs from 1st August to 31st August 1999



chance to nominate a Loo of the Year is on 31 July 31. After that you'll just have to cross your legs.

Oi you, that's my licence fee you're spending

While I was at BBC the other day installing Greg Dyke's new hotline to Tony Blair, I came across an invoice from a company called Boston Business Computing. The bill was even more hefty than my usual estimates – coming in at around \$30 million. And what the hell did the BBC pay this huge amount of dosh to this small firm for? Its URL, that's what. You see, Boston Business Computing owns www.bbc.com. Well, it did anyway and rumour is that Auntie will be using its expensive new address from September.

Porn again Christian

Not really a religious bloke, myself, but I know a man who is. His name's Mark Tronson and he's the official Chaplain to the Australian Cricket Board. Now your average Aussie likes his sheilas, but this geezer has taken things a bit far. He put up a Christian erotica Web site presumably to act as an alternative to all the non-Christian porn on the Net. Putting the bap back in Baptist, the minister deems his site "wholesome" as it's based on the Song of Solomon. This is a right saucy bit of the Bible apparently, with loads of heaving breasts and the like in it. But now the killjoy has taken the site down because it was proving too popular. In the four days the site was up, it was visited by 3,000 people.

The Buller pulls up his trousers, perhaps for the last time, then picks up the pieces industry cowboys leave behind. Overheard a rumour, and dying to tell someone? Email in strictest confidence to



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New Beetle

In the footsteps of a design classic, it's time for Newbeetlemania

Although the new VW Beetle won't be available in the UK until the end of the year, Volkswagen's 'microsite' aims to create a buzz on the Web, well before extending its launch into traditional media.

The Web strategy was developed by Carat Interactive (www.carat.com) and VW, and the site design came from Deepend (www.deepend.co.uk), targeted at the techno-savvy generation expected to buy the new Beetle. It's a deliberate campaign to sever links with the tradition of the 'people's car', and on first inspection it seems to be working.

Entering the site, a low front-angle view of the car greets you, with options for a Flash animated site or a more static view,

created with HTML, Java and animated GIFs. Both options let you explore the car's technology, design and vita, statistics from virtually every angle, with panels explaining all important enhancements.

The site has a clean, fresh design, with lots of seductive curves and shimmering outlines which mean lots of information can be onscreen without it ever appearing cluttered.

Although the sci-fi allusions in the headings (*Close Encounter*, *The Arrival* and so on) might cause a few groans, they're a sign of the distancing from the 'classic' Beetle. And more dynamic views are provided at the Rotoscope section using QuickTime VR.

The site deserves praise for its innovation and it is definitely worth the visit, even if you're not buying the real thing (and unless you're already on the waiting list, you're not). But the download speeds can plummet to M25 traffic-jam sowness. This suggests less



HOW DO THEY DO THAT?



Flashing Lights

The site's game, *Flashing Lights*, is based on the tradition of Beetle drivers flashing their lights as they pass each other. You get points for flashing Beetles, but flash at the police and you'll be stopped. 'The game was built using Macromedia Director,' explains Helena Swan of Deepend. 'We were trying to capture the passion for the Beetle, taking the values of the classic 'bug' and bridging them to this contemporary car.'

Flash and more poke might be in order. Let's hope it won't be the same for the New Beetle itself. *Mark Whitehead*

www.newbeetle.co.uk

Design

Content

TRANSPORT OF DELIGHT

Mini www.mini.co.uk

Autosuggestion www.autosuggestion.co.uk

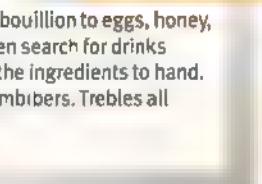
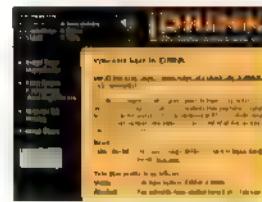
Top Gear www.topgear.beb.com

CLICK HERE

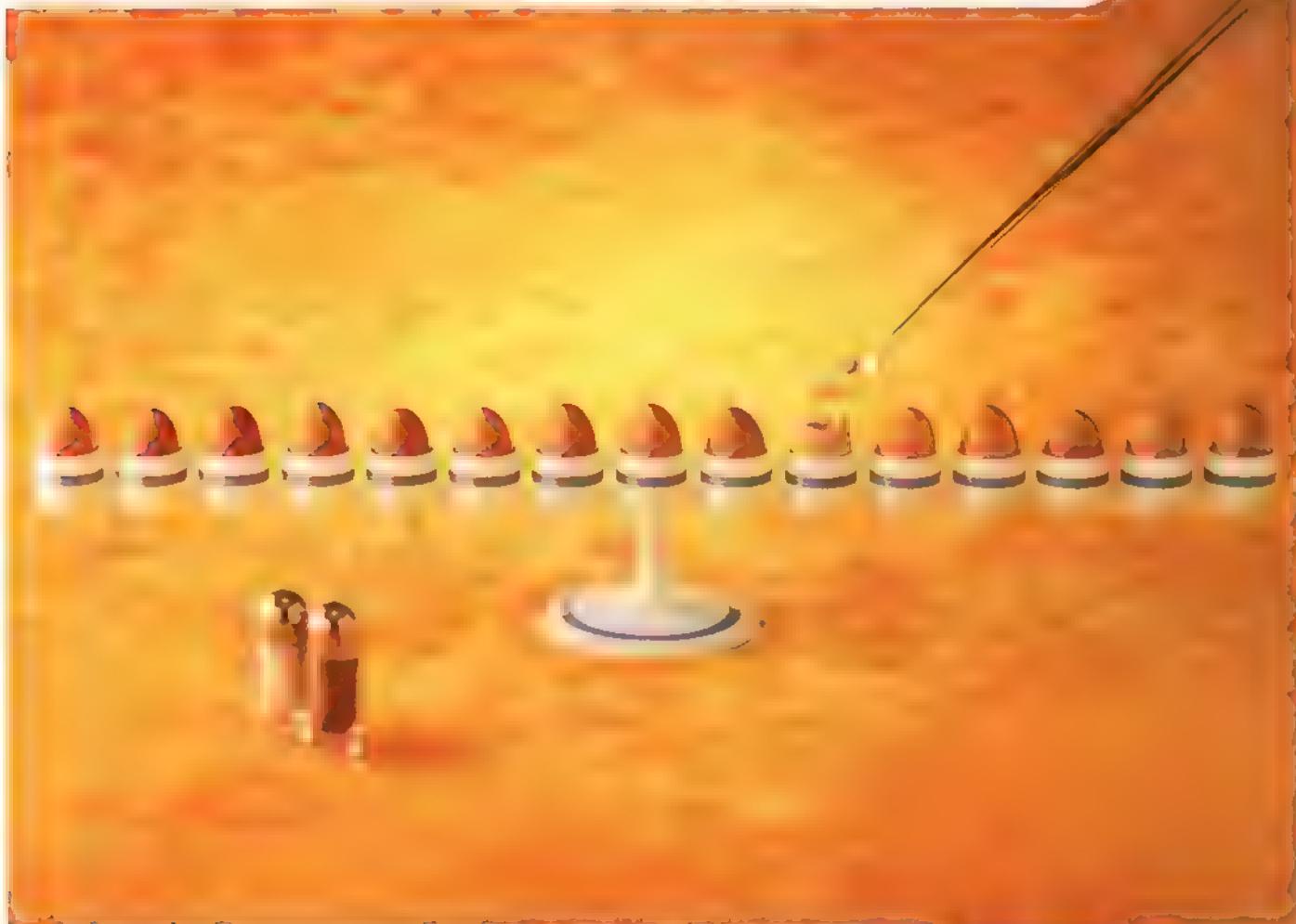
Booze cruise around the Web

Looking at Web sites can be thirsty work but this site has the perfect cocktail to slake any thirst. If you fancy creating a tipple from the dregs of your booze cupboard, you can select from 162 ingredients ranging from apricot brandy and beef bouillon to eggs, honey, ice cream and Chartreuse. Then search for drinks which can be concocted with the ingredients to hand. You can even rate it for other imbibers. Trebles all round. Great site.

www.idrink.com/home.htm



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		<small>Switch only</small>		
		<small>Card No.</small>		
		<input type="text"/>		
		<small>Expiry date</small>		
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Postcode		<small>Valid from</small>		
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Many of the new technologies will be used to reduce costs and increase efficiency, such as the use of automated guided vehicles (AGVs) for material handling.

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CDG1



tried & tested

Hot Downloads



Top Flash developer resources

FlashPad www.flasher.net/flashpad.html

Share tips, tricks and ideas for creating dynamic, data driven animations. Discuss current trends and techniques and meet other flash masters.

Virtual-FX www.virtual-fx.net

A community-based site featuring a messageboard, tutorials, source files, FAQs, games, links and sites of the week.

FlashMaster www.flashmaster.nu

Enjoy FlashMaster's slick design and browse through plenty of useful resources on the site, including a gallery, chat, mailing list and site builder's workshop.

Flashzone www.flashzone.com

This comprehensive site has Flash resources galore, including a 3D zone, chat and articles from Flashzone experts.

FlashLite www.flashlite.net

Aimed at Flash newbies, FlashLite features classrooms, help files, featured sites and fun diversions.

Flash Central www.flashcentral.com

This site hosts a live Flash talk once a week and showcases work from Flash developers.

Flasher Discussion Group www.devdesign.com/flash

Need a lively and up to date discussion online? Point your Flash-enabled browser here.

Macromedia www.macromedia.com/software/flash

The mothership. Check out the Shocked site of the day. You can also get tutorials and support information.

Flash Resource www.flashresource.com

The place to come if you're after resources, tutorials and links geared towards network server technologies using Flash Generator, ASP and SQL.

Macromania <http://users.bigpond.com/xtian>

Drop in to Macromania and sample the hundreds of tips and tricks, movie clips, news and views.

NetMaster 99

NetMaster gets the best performance out of your Net connection by changing hidden settings in Windows 95 and 98. You can tweak a raft of esoteric Registry settings, such as IPMTU, Black Hole Detect and MaxMTU. There's a bit of trial and error involved, but there's plenty of help included.

Price \$15 (around £9)

Platforms Win9x/NT
Download size 2.1Mb
www.copernic.com



Price Free

Platforms Win9x/NT
Download size 2.1Mb
www.copernic.com

HTML validation as you type, style sheet support, and a macro facility that lets you automate tasks. There's also a project editor so you can manage multiple files with ease.

Price \$65 (around £39)

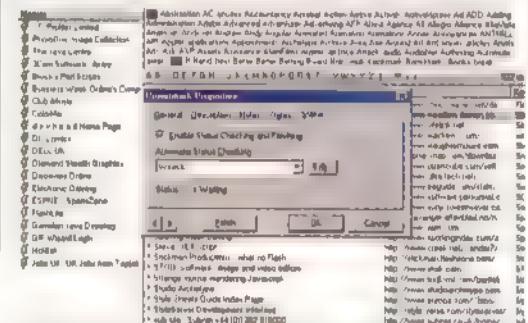
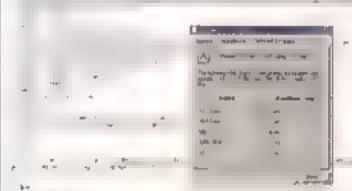
Platforms Win9x/NT
Download size 5.75Mb
www.webaurora.com

N-Track Studio

N-Track Studio is a multi-track recorder that lets you record and mix WAV and MIDI files. You can record a virtually unlimited number of audio and MIDI tracks, loop WAV files and apply audio effects in real time. Using the virtual mixer, you can adjust track levels and pan a track to the left or right channel. Once you've finished recording, you can mixdown all the tracks into a single WAV.

WebAurora

Aimed at intermediate HTML coders, this editor has a comprehensive set of wizards to make your site editing experience easy, fun and productive. Useful features include colour tag highlighting, tag closure, context-sensitive tag tips,



Freeway

Quark Xpress for the Web, Freeway follows the DTP convention of using frames to control text and graphics within a page. Its master pages and templates mean you don't have to spend hours redesigning your site. Floating palettes provide tools for text formatting, colours, styles, embedded media and JavaScript actions. There's no site manager or code editor, but Freeway does let you concentrate on design.

Price £199
Platform Mac
Download size 5.4Mb
www.softpress.com

Copernic 99

Copernic is a standalone searchbot that checks over 30 information sources, including AltaVista, Excite and HotBot. You can search in newsgroups, or through email directories. Your results are displayed with a relevancy score, without duplicates. You can also save your results for browsing at a later date. Copernic's search wizard's on hand to help with your more complex queries.

Powermarks

Losing your way in a sea of bookmarks? This excellent bookmark utility could help. It keeps all your Opera, Netscape and Explorer bookmarks behind one user-friendly interface, which has a powerful search option. Powermarks watches your browser, so adding URLs is a breeze – keywords and description fields are automatically retrieved from the page in your browser. It can even check that your bookmarks aren't out of date and filter out duplicates.

Price \$24.95 (around £15)

Platforms Win9x/NT
Download size 455K
www.kaylon.com

Greg Sloman brings you the products worth downloading. Want to know everything there is about Flash



Spinner Plus

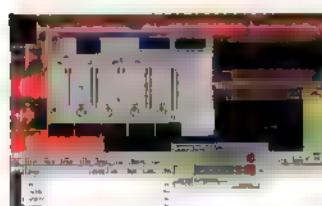
Streaming audio mania continues with the latest release of Spinner Plus, a standalone Internet radio player with access to over 175,000 songs. Choose from channels such as Acid Jazz, Awesome '80s, Swing, Techno, Country, Hip-Hop, Jungle and Oldies. The quality is superb, courtesy of RealNetworks G2 technology, and you can adjust audio streaming to match your connection speed. Other features include artist, song and title information, as well as searching, and buying CDs directly from within the player. Spin up, guy.

Price Free

Platforms Win9x (Mac uses browser-based player)

Download size 1.37Mb

www.spinner.com



Price \$30 (around £18)

Platforms Win9x/NT

Download size 3.8Mb

www.fasoft.com

Web Devil

This program lets you download Web pages, 'mages and links for offline browsing. WebDevil has an easy to use interface and is scriptable and recordable. It also features a URL and email extractor, which records these links into a simple text file for editing.

Price \$20 (around £12)

Platform Mac

Download size 505k

www.chaoticsoftware.com

SETI@Home

Fancy discovering life on other planets? Here's your chance. SETI@home runs as a screensaver and scans radio telescope data

downloaded from the Net.

Price Free

Platforms Win9x/Mac

Download size 704K

<http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu>

Suitcase 8

This powerful utility is full of features to organise your fonts. Suitcase 8 turns fonts on or off without needing a restart. It also features FontAgent, which searches for all the fonts on your hard drive, removes duplicates and separates TrueType from Postscript.

Price \$89.95 (around £54)

Platform Mac

Download size 505k

www.chaoticsoftware.com

Download size 2.2Mb

www.extensis.com/suitcase

Style Master

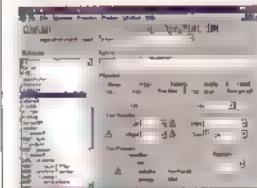
This powerful style sheet editor lets you select properties, and comes with a tutorial, and quality style sheet guide. You can also check for browser bugs and preview your work.

Price \$29 (around £17.50)

Platforms Win9x/NT/Mac

Download size 1.4Mb

www.westciv.com/style.master



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In Tried & Tested

Internet Magazine is committed to bringing you the best and most authoritative reviews in the Internet industry. Every month we test and rate the most important new Internet products. If you're making a buying decision or doing a bit of pre-purchase research, the following pages are not to be missed.

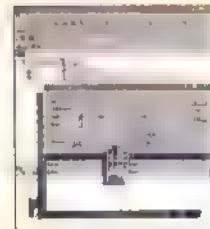
In Tried & Tested you'll find the latest news on newly-announced products, hard-hitting reviews of key product releases and comprehensive Labs tests.

Key reviews for August



Always wanted to belong to a newsgroup but didn't know how to get involved? This month, Roger Gann and the labs team tell you everything you need to know about news readers

[See page 80](http://www.page80.com)



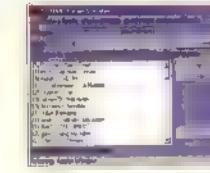
Reduce the stress of your site design by using Ace Expert's HTML editor

[See page 89](http://www.page89.com)



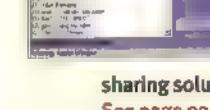
Use 3D technology to make your site interactive with Cryo Networks' Site Construction Set

[See page 90](http://www.page90.com)



MultiChat software lets you host your own chat forums on your Web site

[See page 92](http://www.page92.com)



Nexland Internet's ISB200e is a simple sharing solution for small networks

[See page 93](http://www.page93.com)

Star Ratings



Must buy

Should buy

Could buy

Poor buy

Don't buy

Reading the Newsgroups

Once you've found a good newsgroup, you'll need a news reader to access the messages that have been posted. **Roger Gann** and the labs team test six of the best

Usenet newsgroups are publicly posted discussion forums for people with shared interests. Usenet isn't an organization, and no group or individual has authority over Usenet as a whole. No one controls access to newsgroups and no one decides who can post articles. It's not publicly funded in any way and it's not an academic network.

The organizations of Usenet haven't changed much since its early days – groups of text messages are stored in newsgroups, which are arranged in strict hierarchies that define what subscribers can expect to find in each. The messages are presented in a list, known as a thread, that shows the original message, the responses to the message, and the responses to the responses, so you can follow an entire conversation or just the parts you're interested in.

To access the messages posted to a newsgroup (and to post your own) you need some software. You can use a browser (see the Other solutions box), but the best method is a news reader, which lets you connect to your ISP's news servers, sift out spam, manage the multitude of messages and even

News reader checklist

Interface

The best news readers use a multi-pane interface (rather than separate windows) that segregates newsgroups, headers and postings. User-defined folders are another must-have, letting you move or copy interesting messages to permanent storage. Drag-and-drop is also an essential.

Filtering

The signal to noise ratio of newsgroups is so low that you need as much help as possible to weed out the rubbish. Filtering is essential for heavy-duty Usenet users – you should be able to create rules and filters that automatically restrict what you see (a kill list or ignore thread) as well as closely follow other topics, such as a watch list. A filter can be global or applied to a particular newsgroup, and you can choose to assign a time limit for the filter. Another essential is conditional filtering, which performs an action, such as decoding, after having made a selection.

download and store the occasional attached image file

Free speech

Most newsgroups aren't moderated, so you can say anything you like. But be aware that the responses will be just as

vociferous. Newsgroups are primarily text-based, but you can upload binary files and, thanks to the unregulated nature of newsgroups, this is where you'll find pornography and pirated software. But there are also thousands of newsgroups that

Automation

If you can connect at cheap-rate, download the new messages for the groups you subscribe to and disconnect, then read postings offline, it's a big plus.

Decoding

Most news readers automatically decode MIME and UUEncoded binaries and image files. Some now let you view an image without you having to detach it first.

Searching

Most newsreaders permit you to search through headers, subject and sender at least, and message bodies, if you've retrieved those as well.

Multiple news servers

While your ISP probably provides only one news server, you'll want the ability to access others, such as Microsoft's news servers. You'll find most news readers feature this useful option.

contain perfectly legitimate binary files.

Newsgroups are extremely popular – more than 30,000 exist worldwide, though not every news server carries the complete set. The advantage of all this diversity (apart from meeting like-minded

News readers compared

Newsreader	URL	Vendor	Platforms	Filtering/ rules	Searchable	Threading
Gravity	www.microplanet.com	Microplanet	Win 9x	£24	✓	✓
Outlook Express	www.microsoft.com	Microsoft	Win/Mac	Free	✓	✓
Messenger	www.netscape.com	Netscape	Win/Mac	Free	✓	✓
TIFNY	www.tifny2.com	Phonetics International	Win 9x	£21	✓	✓
Xnews	http://xnews.3dnews.net	Luu Tran	Win 9x	Free	✓	✓
News Agent	www.forteinc.com	Forte	Win 9x/Win 3.1	Free	✓	✓



people) is that you can find specific information on just about any topic, often right from the horse's mouth – Usenet newsgroups are a tremendous resource.

The topics covered are wide-ranging to say the least – if you have a bee in your bonnet about something, the odds are there's a newsgroup discussing it. If you like Star Wars, for instance, you can choose one of 20 newsgroups devoted to this subject.

If you need a hand getting Linux to work, place your plea in a Linux newsgroup and you'll be inundated with assistance.

Do it yourself

And if a newsgroup covering your pet hobbyhorse doesn't exist, there's nothing to stop you creating your own. If you want it to be a standard Usenet newsgroup, you must submit a Request For Discussion (RFD) document to the news.groups newsgroup. The group then organises a straw vote where anybody who wants to can vote on your proposal.

The first alternative hierarchy – .alt – was established because some people felt a vote shouldn't be necessary. Contrary to popular belief, .alt doesn't mean alternative topics, it means alternative newsgroup management structure. To start an .alt newsgroup, all you need to do is write a convincing newsgroup control message in alt.config to persuade the news admin strators to go along with it.

There are also local and private newsgroups. A discussion group created on a corporate intranet is an example of a private newsgroup. Most ISPs and computer companies offer a handful of local newsgroups where they make technical support announcements that no one but their customers would want to see.

Newsgroup structures

There are five types of newsgroups:

- The Usenet hierarchy

- The various alternative hierarchies
- ClariNet, a fee-based hierarchy from United Press International
- Local newsgroups
- Mail reflectors (which convert email-based discussion groups into newsgroup format, for distribution).

The Usenet hierarchy contains eight major categories, identified by the following prefixes – comp (computer), news (information about newsgroups), rec (recreational topics, such as hobbies, sports and movies), sci (science), soc (social, cultural and religious), talk (discussion about issues), humanities (literary and cultural subjects) and misc (miscellaneous, such as jobs and items for sale).

The alternative hierarchies Usenet groups are alt (alternative subjects, ranging from the serious to the bizarre) and biz (various business topics, including advertisements).

Naming

The Usenet hierarchy follows the same dot-naming and domain convention that you'll find elsewhere on the Net. For instance, alt.usenet.offline-reader is a newsgroup specialising in offline readers, in the Usenet area of the alt category. And the newsgroup Microsoft.public.inetexplorer.ie4.setup is devoted to people who want to set up Internet Explorer 4.

The messages in newsgroups are stored on news servers owned by ISPs, universities, companies, and other large entities all over the world. Most news servers only keep recently posted messages – otherwise they'd run out of storage space. To carry a majority of these groups, a news server needs tens or hundreds of gigabytes of hard disk space and hundreds of megabytes of RAM – the daily newsgroup traffic for a news server can be up to anything up to 600Mb.

Other solutions

You don't have to use a news reader to access newsgroups – there are a number of Web-based alternatives. My Deja News (at www.deja.com) has over 100 million archived Usenet messages dating back to 1995 from more than 30,000 groups. It has good search tools that let you hunt for specific subjects, authors and keywords. Results can be sorted by relevance, newsgroup, author, subject thread or date. You can even post replies within the browser. It has email spam filters which let you post messages through My Deja News using your own email address without having to worry about being flooded with spam. The only drawback is that my Deja News is text only, so postings with binaries are absent. But the service is free.



My Deja News has more than 100 million messages dating back to 1995

Reference.com (at www.reference.com) archives newsgroup messages from 22,000 groups, but it also records millions of messages from mailing lists. Reference.com has a wide range of search options and lets you browse newsgroups, read messages, view threads, and post replies (if you register with the site).

Easy Usenet (www.easysenet.com) offers a similar service – it's a free service for text-based postings – if you want the binaries as well, you'll have to pay the \$6.95 (around £4.17) monthly subscription fee. Another subscription site to check out is Newsguy at www.newsguy.com.

Remember that Web-based news browsing response times are sluggish compared with a conventional news reader, so using a browser can be a slow way to conduct your newsgroup business. There is an upside, though – most news servers delete postings older than a week to conserve storage space – but Web-based news browsers archive this enormous quantity of data.

Lists of free news servers

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/mick.s2/news>
www.freennp.com
<http://home1.gte.net/dochomp/servers.htm>
www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Quad/2554/usenet.htm
<http://artemis.efes.net/nevit>
www.gj.net/~bhkraft

News reading tips

- Subscribe carefully – only subscribe to those groups you really, really want to read. Be ruthless when unsubscribing, too.
- Always apply filtering – at the very least it'll help to keep down your phone bills.
- Kill two birds with one stone by downloading your newsgroups while browsing – this'll also save on the phone bill.
- Use your newsreader's tools to selectively view messages you've already downloaded.
- Before posting a question, check the frequently asked questions (FAQs). This will get you what you're looking for, without incurring the wrath of other Usenetters. The mother of all FAQs, with upwards of 900 files, is news.answers.

Multiple servers	Auto decode	Image management	Inline viewing	Rating
✓	✗	✗	✗	★★★★
✓	✓	✗	✓	★★★★
✓	✓	✗	✓	★★★
✓	✓	✓	✓	★★★
✓	✓	✗	✓	★★★★
✗	✗	✗	✗	★★

The Internet Solution for your office.

No set-up costs	✓
Bonded ISDN (128kbps)	✓
Ascend Router	✓
UK domain name	✓
20 Mb web space	✓
SMTP mail forwarding	✓
Up to 29 users	✓
POP3 mail box	✓
Free Technical Support	✓
Compression	✓
TOTAL COST	£995
Dialback option	+£300

This service requires an ISDN connection
to your telecommunications provider

No blurb. No sales patter.
Just the facts.

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INTERNET SERVICES

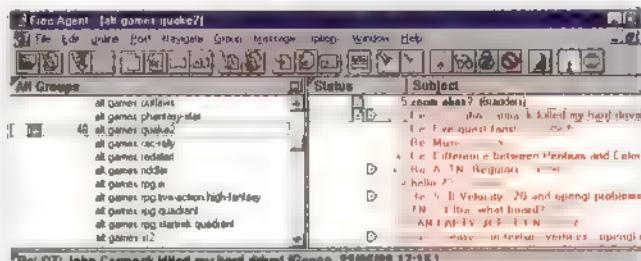
0171 536 9090

www.frontier-internet.ltd.uk

info@itech.net



FreeAgent



Free Agent's features used to be described as 'hot', but they've become outdated

Free Agent is a veteran news reader, but it's got some catching up to do

One of the best-known news readers is Forté Agent, which was once the news reader to use. You can now download a free version of the program (for academic, non-profit or non-commercial use) called Free Agent.

Free Agent hasn't been upgraded for a couple of years and its rivals are a lot easier to use, but it does a good job of helping you manage and read newsgroups, threads and individual messages.

Forté's commercial version of this product – Agent – has additional message-management features, but both programs have the same three-window interface – one each for newsgroups, threads and message bodies.

But the never-ending row of toolbar buttons and the labyrinthine menu structure makes using the product less than intuitive. You'll be disappointed if you want to access multiple news servers – you have to re-enter the server details each time you want to switch.

Free Agent supports multilevel threading, using indents to tell you who responded to an original posted message, and also who responded to a response, as well as watching threads.

Free Agent can automatically combine multiple message attachments and decode the downloaded file into binary format – a hot feature in its day.

But you can't view images within the program, and you're dependent on external graphics programs, such as Paint Shop Pro.

You can set the number of days you want to keep your message for

before it's deleted, and you can specify how you want the program to deal with messages you've already read – delete them now or in a specified number of days.

Free Agent can be configured for online or offline operation. You can eliminate cross-posted messages (identical messages posted to multiple groups), sort messages and filter how messages are displayed. You can also send and receive mail without leaving the application and drag and drop messages into custom folders.

The commercial version of the program, Agent, looks similar to Free Agent, but has some extra features, plus some better filtering tools to help you manage the flood of information.

Free Agent lets you respond to newsgroup messages in email, but it can't retrieve email – although Agent has this facility. In addition to a full send-and-receive email capability, Agent has an address book which lets you create folders for storing and organising messages of interest. You can also choose to display the folders in the newsgroups list box.

Free Agent is past its sell-by date – it's no longer the benchmark product it once was and it's easily eclipsed by easier to use, more powerful alternatives that carry the same price tag. Free Agent does the job, but it's hard work.



Free Agent

Price Free (Agent is £17.40 for download, £24 boxed)

Pros Free, lots of features

Cons No multiple servers, no inline graphics, confusing interface

Contact Forté Inc

Phone (001760) 431 6460

www.forteinc.com/getfa/download.htm

Gravity

Gravity helps you manage your postings with rules-based filtering

Gravity is one of those newsreader rarities – you have to pay for it. But it's available as shareware, and you can download a limited demo from the MicroPlanet Web site.

The program has a classic three-pane interface, with newsgroups, headers and message contents in separate windows. The current version supports multiple news servers and lets you switch between them on the fly.

You can subscribe to newsgroups, download headers and messages, and reply and post within minutes of installation.

Gravity is highly configurable – almost every option, from screen layout to article layout is available. The usual newsreader features are handled well – these include internal database and offline and online options, send and receive mail, capabilities, multiple signature files, right mouse button functionality, extensive online help, and an intuitive status bar for monitoring download progress.

There's also a scoring system that assigns a relevancy percentage to article headers, a spell checker, newsgroup previewing, an HTML suppression tool, DejaNews search capabilities, and the ability to import or export NEWSRC files.

The image gallery lets you organise, view, and delete downloaded images and movies.



Gravity's news reader will attract serious newsgroup users because of its wealth of features, configuration settings and rules-based filtering

Filtering is one of Gravity's great strengths – it gives you a high degree of control over your message management. The program comes with several preset rules, including Bozo Bin, which lets you ignore postings from specified senders. The filters let you create a wide range of individualised views. Another useful preconfigured rule rejects spam, which is defined as articles that are posted to more than five newsgroups.

You can configure the program to identify key articles by playing WAV sounds or displaying text messages. You can also forward articles to your friends, mark specific news clippings as important and automatically delete messages.

Gravity is a solid offline reader – if you mark certain messages or images for retrieval at a later stage, it will automatically dial in and download them for you. If you mark images, the program will decode them as they download.

Images can be viewed as thumbnail images or as part of a slideshow. Alternatively, Gravity will automatically load your default graphics viewer for looking at downloaded pictures.

Gravity is the most expensive newsreader in this lab's test at £24. But if you're going to spend a lot of time in newsgroups, you'll want something that can reduce the postings to a manageable amount, and Gravity's excellent rules-based filtering makes this possible.



Gravity

Price £39.95 (around £24)

Pros A wealth of features, highly configurable, excellent rules and filtering, good offline reading, good help

Cons Can't display inline pictures

Contact MicroPlanet

Phone (001919) 831 9733

www.microplanet.com

MICROSOFT

Outlook Express

A vastly improved news reader that comes free with Internet Explorer



Outlook Express deals with mail and newsgroups under the same program, but if you instal Outlook 98 or 2000, it's truncated to a newsreader program. Now in version 5, Outlook supports Microsoft's Secure Password Authentication, which is essential if you're an MSN subscriber.

When it was first launched, Outlook was limited for a newsreader, but it now offers good competition to its commercial rivals. Version 5 was released a few months ago with IE5. It might not be a match for rules-happy readers, such as Gravity and Agent, but Outlook can now significantly improve the postings' signal to noise ratio.

Its interface and overall organisation remain similar to version 4 – first-rate. It uses the classic three-pane interface to show servers and subscribed groups along the left-hand side, while message headers sit at the top right, and message contents preview in the pane below.

An unusual addition to the interface is a fourth pane, which shows your email address book – but this is easily removed. The intelligent design, which includes hierarchical folders, makes newsgroup navigation intuitive.

As before, Outlook can cope with multiple news servers. Adding a news server is easy, thanks to the wizard that takes you through the process. Header downloads are fast, and instant searches dynamically display pertinent groups as you type in a text string.

A major improvement is multiple user personalities or identities, which come with their own servers and rules – these are useful if you travel through newsgroups.

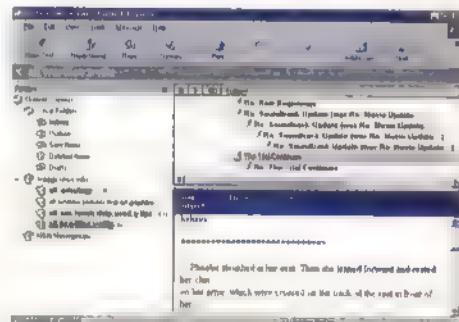
Another area that's had a makeover is rules-based filtering. You can now create filters with several final resolutions (not just

delete them, as with earlier editions), including deletion, highlighting, flagging and marking for download at a later date. But there's still no sophisticated

processing or automatic movement of messages into a folder.

Outlook now works better offline – a single button synchronizes all your subscribed newsgroups to your specifications – such as downloading your new messages or just the headers. It also lets you connect to multiple servers and newsgroups in a single session.

The newsreader automatically displays GIF and JPEG images in the preview pane, and multipart images can be decoded and combined, though you must manually order the



Outlook Express has been through several incarnations, but it's now a commendable news reader

sections. Outlook supports MIME and UUencoding and will let you make searches by message content, sender, subject, date range and flag.

Outlook Express is arguably the best all-round news reader. Heavy-duty newsgroup users might prefer Gravity, but for the average user, Outlook has just about everything.

You have to instal Internet Explorer to get the program – which some people object to – but for the price, who's complaining?

★★★

Outlook Express 5

Price Free

Pros Intelligent design, easy for beginners, continues to improve

Cons An Internet Explorer accessory

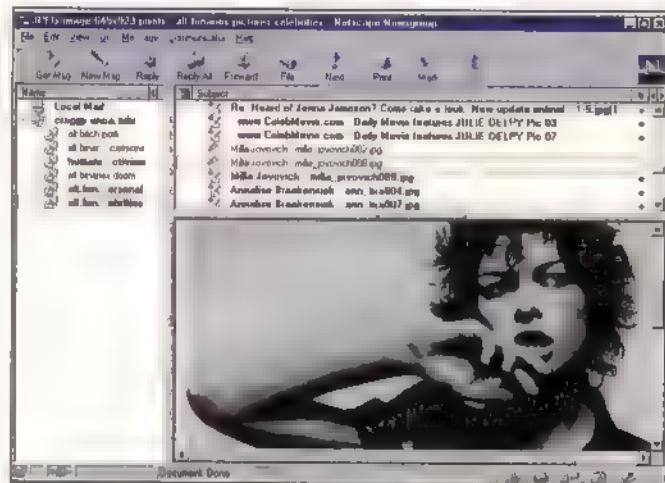
Contact Microsoft UK

Phone (0845) 002 000

www.microsoft.com/windows/oe

Messenger

NETScape



The Messenger layout consists of servers (left), headers (top) and message (bottom)

Messenger is a suitable entry-level news reader, but it lacks vital features

Netscape Messenger is an email and news client which is free if you install the Netscape Communicator Suite. It uses three panes to show servers and subscribed groups along the left-hand side, headers in the top right, and message contents in the bottom right of the interface.

The layout makes it easy to save newsgroup messages by dragging and dropping them onto folders. With the Communicator 4.61, you can also reorder newsgroups in Messenger's Folder pane.

The program still automatically retrieves message contents whenever you highlight a message, though. And the toolbar remains static – you can't change it, unlike the highly configurable Outlook Express. But Messenger connects to multiple servers, downloads headers fast, and displays message contents in a preview pane.

For simple tasks, it's as good as Outlook – you can connect to multiple servers, organise messages by threads, and sort by date, sender or subject. You can also flag headers for later retrieval, post new messages and reply to postings you've received.

The fact that Messenger doubles as a primary email client and integrates well with a major browser is a bonus, but it also has some irritating niggles. Messenger automatically retrieves the contents

of a message as soon as you highlight it. This creates delays as downloads initiate, even if you move on to another header.

Messenger's filtering system has been improved, with added deletion and marking features – useful for downloading at a later stage. But these are confined to the Subject and From fields. Offline reading lets you flag headers and retrieve message contents for reading later on.

You can synchronise and download marked headers in all the newsgroups on all the servers with one command. You can search headers for senders or subjects, but not the message itself. Messenger can also automatically decode and display inline JPEG and GIF images.

Choosing whether to use Messenger Express will depend on which browser you use – Outlook Express 5 is a superior program.

But if you're a Nav gator devotee and you don't spend much time in the newsgroups, it probably isn't worth switching to Outlook. If you're a newsgroupie, one of the third-party newsreaders might be a more attractive solution.

★★★

Messenger

Price Free

Pros Price, displays inline images, good search function

Cons Fixed toolbar, weak filtering capabilities

Contact Netscape

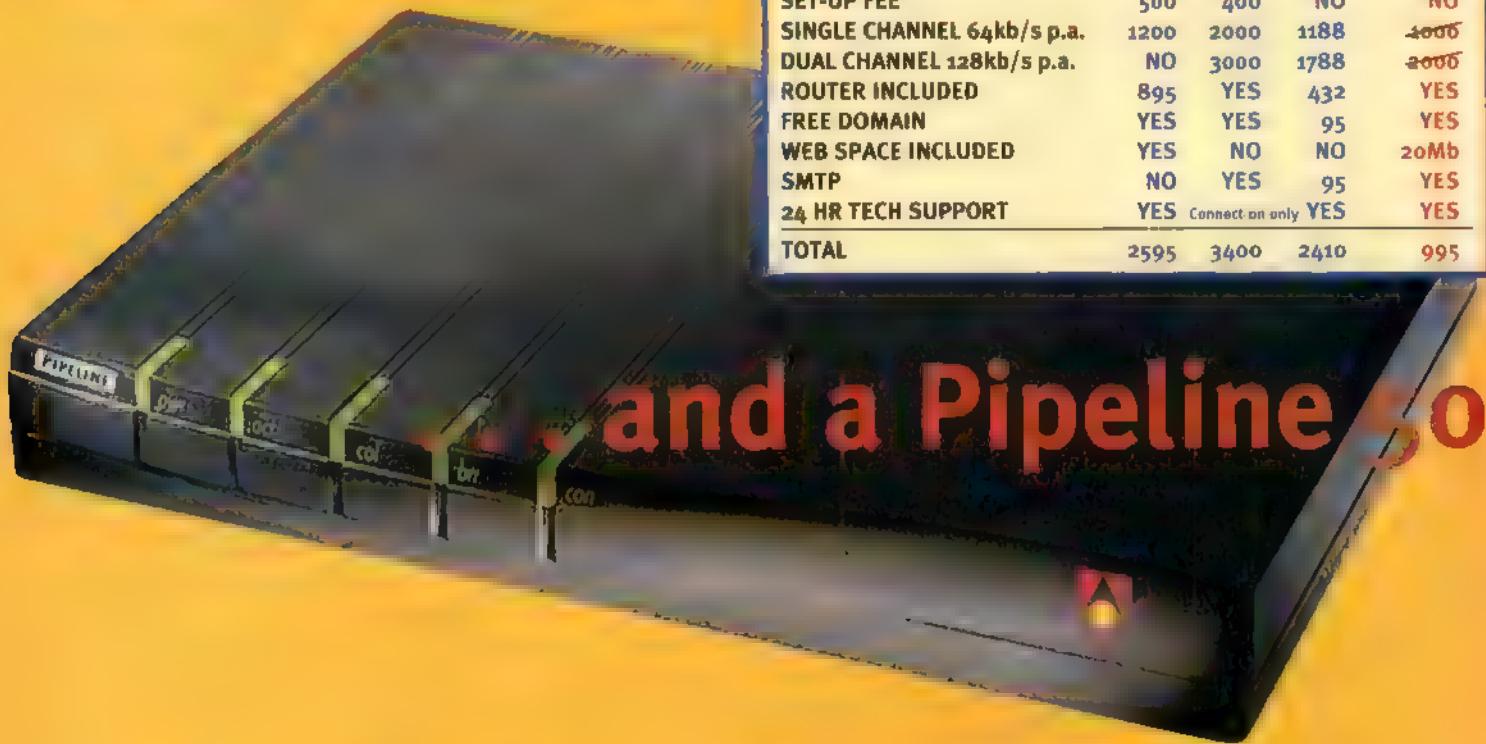
Phone (0181) 564 5100

www.netscape.com/computing/download/index.html

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TIFNY

TIFNY specialises in searching for and handling newsgroup binaries and pictures

TIFNY is different to the other news readers in this test. It's more concerned with the binary content that many of the more exotic newsgroups carry – this includes pictures, movie clips, audio clips and even executables.

TIFNY is a commercial product, retailing for \$35 (around £21), but you can download it for free. The first thing that strikes you about TIFNY is its interface, which is quite unlike any other newsreader in this test.

It ignores the standard Windows design – the whole interface is bright blue, with large colourful buttons arranged around the edge of the window. There's a normal menu bar at the top, which is useful, but only because the button icons are less than self-explanatory.

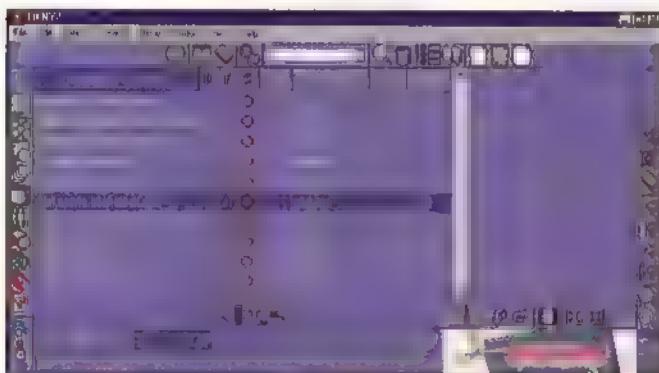
TIFNY is hard to master, which is

them. Its built-in image browser lets you see images before you download them. You can also browse images offline and create slide shows. Version 2 supports all file types and text messages, including executables and ZIP files, as well as sound and video.

TIFNY's option filters let you define the groups and the types of messages that interest you. You can search by author, group, file type, keyword, and more, depending on your preferences. You can also scan message headers using TIFNY's preview mode to remove irrelevant entries. It also removes duplicates.

Some of version 2's other new features include ramped-up database capabilities, which let you organise, sort, search, rearrange, resize, hide, slice, and dice your data. It also adds context-sensitive pop-up menus, a status bar to give you updates on available disk and database space, and an attractive interface.

TIFNY is useful if you only want



TIFNY's interface is more attractive than most news readers, but it's awkward to use

a shame because it's a powerful way to download graphics en masse. The online help is pretty good though. The program is easy to install and it automatically picks up existing news server details if you have a conventional news reader, such as Outlook Express, installed on your system.

A major irritation is the banner ads that pop-up in the bottom right-hand corner of the interface. You can turn them off, but only in the registered version.

TIFNY made its name from being able to view and manage newsgroup binary graphics. It can now automatically hunt down newsgroups containing binaries and pictures, and then subscribe to

to gather large numbers of newsgroup graphics on a particular subject (no prizes for guessing what these could be). But if you want to talk to people on Usenet, you should use a more conventional newsreader.

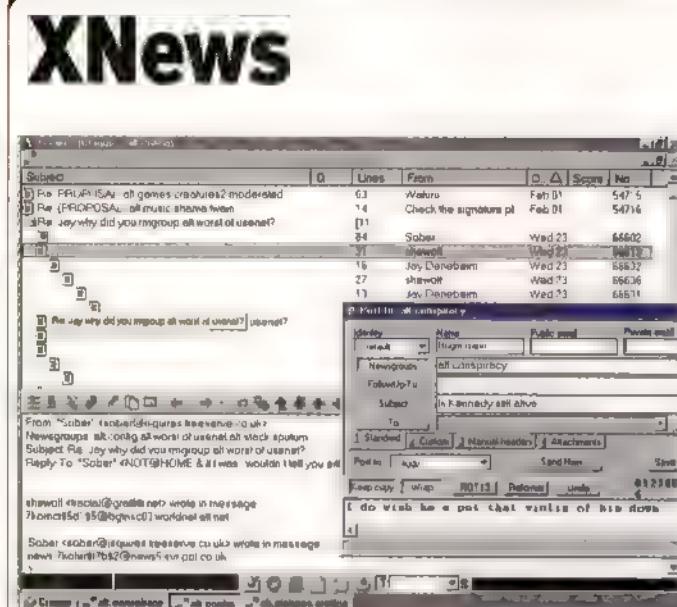
★★★

TIFNY

Price \$35 (around £21)

Pros Graphics specialist – automates downloading and simplifies management
Cons Awkward, non-intuitive interface

Contact Phonetics International
Phone (001212) 505 2392
www.tifny2.com



Xnews is packed with features and does a good job, but it lacks quality filtering

One of the best free news readers, News Express, was poised to dominate Usenet before it all ended abruptly in 1997. But the Xnews program is a most a clone of the late, great news reader. As we last mirrored its core functionality, Xnews has made several improvements. The biggest change is Xnews is a true 32-bit application built for Windows 9x/NT.

Features in the newsreader include a reasonably intuitive interface, a kill list (aka Plonk file) for blacklisting posters (Xnews' version of Gravity's Bozo Bin) and full hypertext URL support – but you'll have to hunt them down as URLs aren't highlighted, underlined or colour-coded. So, unfortunately, you'll need to double-click on any text that looks like a URL.

You also get an inline image viewer with automatic decoding of MIME, Base64 and Unicode encoded binaries, as well as a fast filter for finding articles by subject or author, and a customisable score field for advanced filtering.

Additional features include support for multiple servers and identities, remappable keyboard capabilities, 100 per cent compliance and an optional header. Xnews also provides article caching, quick sorting on six categories (subject, size, sender, date, score and article number), a tabbed interface for rapid switching

Xnews is similar in functionality to the legendary News Express, but it has several improvements

between a listing of all newsgroups and specific newsgroups. There's also email sending capabilities, a link to search for old news articles on DejaNews, and much more.

Die-hard News Express fans might miss the resizable, free-floating windows which could be customised, when they're using the Xnews multi-pane interface. Xnews is also lacking in the filtering department – you can't set it to watch or ignore articles on a thread-by-thread basis.

It's still hard to recommend Xnews over other free news readers, notably Outlook Express, on a features or functions basis. It's nowhere near as slick looking as Messenger, and the interface is relatively crude by comparison, which makes it less intuitive.

You don't need to resort to the online help when you're using Outlook Express or Messenger, and even though Xnews embraces techniques like pop-up context menus, it's not always obvious what you should be doing.

If you're a novice, there's some priceless advice online – "Behold, I send you forth as newbies in the midst of wolves, so RTFM! [read the flaming manual]."

★★★★★

Xnews

Price Free

Pros Lots of features, price
Cons Weak help, poor filtering
Contact Luu Tran
<http://xnews.3dnews.net>



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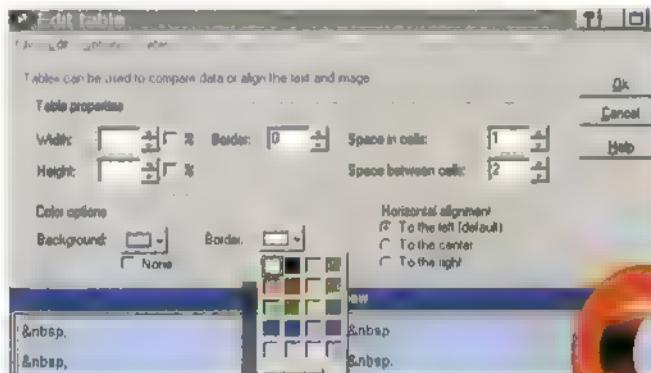
**NETBENEFIT**
INTERNET BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

August's top products

This month's selection includes Ace Expert's HTML editor, Ignite's post-production package, an interactive 3D tool, a multimedia creator, chat room software and an Internet sharing solution

Ace Expert

This user-friendly HTML editor helps you reduce the stress of your site design



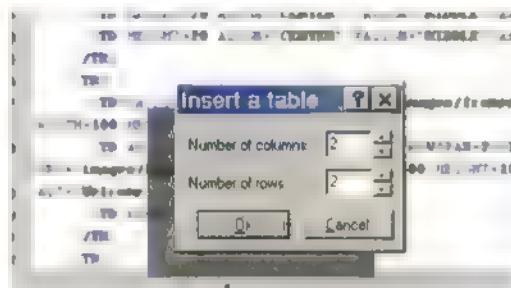
Ace Expert 3.0 is an HTML editor from Visicom Media in Canada. It's a well-designed, user-friendly program with the potential to support novice and professional Web designers.

It's primarily a text editor, but its variety of tools make it more interactive than standard text and visual (WYSIWYG) editors. HTML 4 tags can be applied in several ways, either by hand editing the code from the keyboard, using an edit table HTML tag database, or by employing the powerful built-in macros capable of setting up the most complex tag functions.

There are three basic document formats – HTML, JavaScript and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). Once the program's running, the screen layout is functional and logical.

A left-hand column contains the code explorer. With a strong emphasis on Windows Explorer, the window uses icons to show you all the related links and files relating to the open document.

Adjacent to this is the main window, which contains the document code. Attributes are colour-highlighted by function – which is useful for syntax checking.



Ace Expert is a well designed, user-friendly program that will appeal to novices in particular because you can learn about HTML as you go along

You can see a preview of the layout with a list of other fields to define, including table dimensions, cellpadding and cellspacing and alignment properties. If certain fields of a tag function are missing, right-click in the preview zone – the drop-down menu should contain what you're looking for.

You can add to the tabs that contain all the predefined macros using functions of your choice. You provide a name, choose a shortcut and type in the open and close tags.

The program also includes an FTP transfer package – AceFTP. You can upload your site files to an ISP and they can be visually examined (or listened to) prior to despatch and sent to more than one server simultaneously. Ace Expert can handle transfer interruption and AceFTP will carry on file transfer from the point where the interruption occurred.

The software comes with HTMLcat – an extensive hypertext-driven help document, which covers everything you need to know for your Web design projects. There are also 2,500 images and animated GIFs to use on your site.

Ace Expert is a user-friendly piece of software and the code it produces is neat. It covers most aspects of Web design and will help you to create a site with the minimum of stress.

Charlie Young



You'll find a copy of the Ace Expert software on our free cover CD

Ace Expert

Price \$49.95 (around £33)
Pros Frustration-free software
Cons Don't trust the syntax editor
Contact Visicom Media
Phone (01514) 6720401
www.visic.com



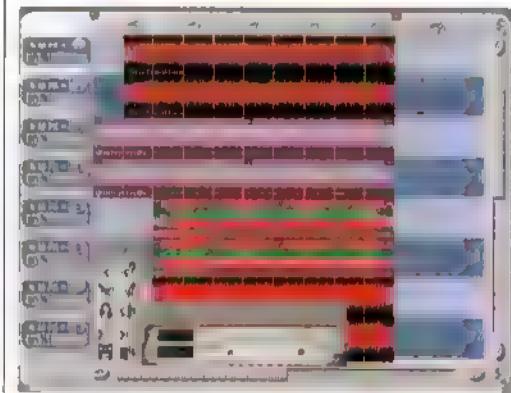
MULTIMEDIA CONTENT CREATOR

Music Maker Professional

Fancy your chances as a producer? Test out your sounds and vision on the Web

This fully-featured program for creating and editing music and video includes a 64-track arranger, thousands of audio and video samples, and for post-production.

Choose from styles like hip-hop, house, techno and classical



Unfortunately, the name Music Maker Professional is slightly misleading. This is not a program for professional musicians. Music Maker is aimed at creative types who want to make multimedia content for the Web.

To create a tune, you load a music sample into your computer's CD player and transfer it to the music score. Using quick-start and wizards, it'll only take you 10 minutes to create some kind of co-ordinated noise.

Producing high-quality music takes a lot longer, since some expertise is needed if you're going to take several samples and match their pitch and beat - measured as

Beats Per Minute (BPM). Once you've learned these tricks, the only limitation is your own talent.

One of the strong points of Music Maker is the 8.4Gb of samples which come bundled with the package. There are 10 audio CDs, four video samplers and a variety of music styles. Each sample is a loop of guitar, bass, drum or other instrument. These audio samples are royalty-free, so you can publish the finished product online.

A recording and editing studio is also included, so it's easy to sample regular music CDs, assuming you've got permission.

When you've finished your musical score, you can add synchronised visuals using your own video clips or the supplied samples, but these aren't very good and they're not royalty-free either.

The user interface also has a few bugs - the drag and drop method of putting samples into a score's unreliable. And the scrolling arrows occasionally decide to play music rather than scroll the screen. But



this is only the first version, so perfection isn't expected.

The idea is sound, but Music Maker Professional doesn't quite succeed. The bugs need to be fixed and it should be £100 cheaper.

Andrew Starling

★★★



You'll find a copy of Music Maker Professional on our free cover CD

Music Maker Professional

Price £369

Pros Easy to use, lots of samples

Cons Bugs and overblown price

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Created by The Royal Bank of Scotland in direct response to its own market research, Business Banking Direct goes on to promise continued competitive pricing after its free banking period expires in two years time. With 24 hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week access via telephone,

John,
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See next page

began to address these demands. Business Banking Direct has taken the lead to waive all transaction charges.

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MultiChat

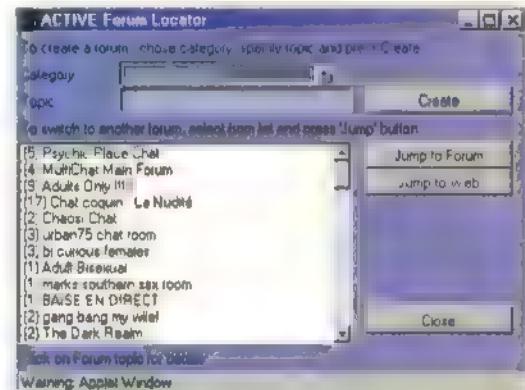
Software that lets you conduct live chatting sessions on your Web site

MultiChat lets you host your own chat forums on your Web site at no cost. Developed and designed for compatibility across multiple operating systems and platforms, you can use it for the Internet or your company Intranet.

You don't have to install anything or spend time maintaining the forum – it's all done for you! Clients and browsers communicate by connecting to a central server.

The chat forum works by offering you a choice between a Java-based client and standard HTML. Both clients can be used to access the same chat room, so you can do this from any location.

There's not much difference between the two clients – they offer the same functionality and design. This flexibility means almost anyone can access your chat room,

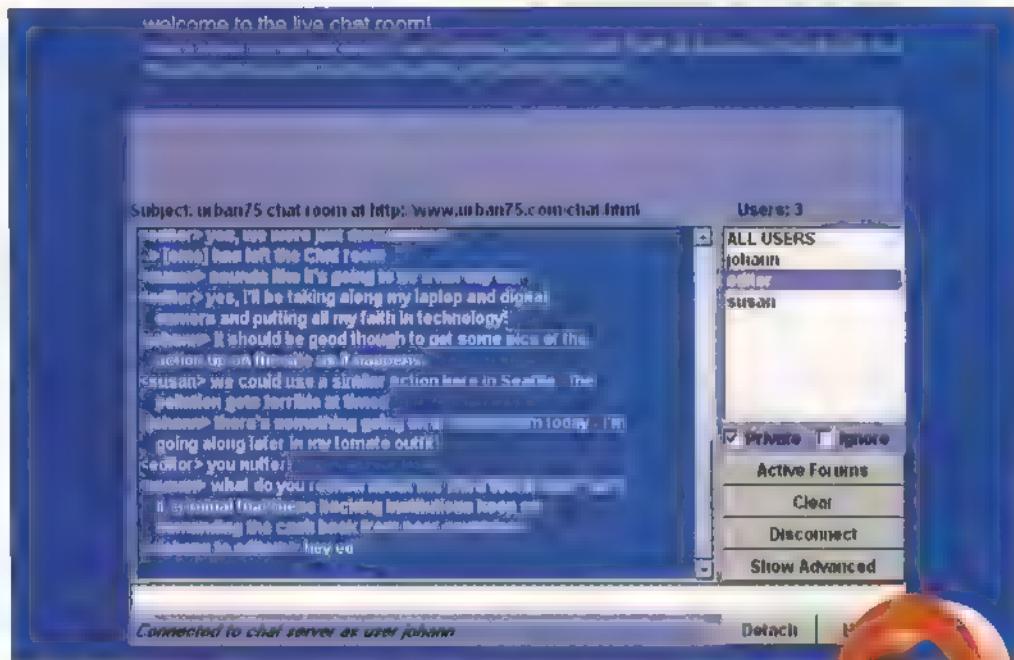


and they won't have to install any plug-ins or special software to participate, which is a bonus.

Open your forum

Installing the chat forum on your own page is simple – pop along to MultiChat's Web site, cut and paste its code into your own page and you're off. The Java version embeds a surprisingly quick-loading z2k applet which is stable in use. The HTML client was still in beta testing at the time of review.

Included in the code are several ed table parameters to help blend the chat room into the style of your own site – the background colour,



Installing the chat forum is simple – just paste MultiChat's code from its Web site into your own page

text colour and font can all be changed easily, and the program has multilingual support. You can

customise the topic and description of your chat room, and Multiple Topic Support lets you specify several subjects on a single chat room.

Visitors enter the forum via the

splash screen and current browsers are displayed on the right-hand side. You can register under any name you like, so don't be surprised to see 'Tony Blair' talking to 'Your Mum's pants'. To participate in the forum, type your words into the dialogue box at the bottom and press enter to upload your words of wisdom.

The forum can handle up to eight users simultaneously, but anything above four or five users can get confusing. MultiChat lets you send confidential posts between selected participants within the forum, which is great if you want to talk about someone without them knowing.

While messages in the Java client appear instantaneously, there's a slight delay in the HTML version because the page automatically updates the window every 10 seconds.

In testing, a conference of Mavis Beacon-inspired speed typists upset the applet and fragmented the chat, but it generally works admirably without crashing.

Pick your subject

Chat forums can be configured to be private or they can appear on MultiChat's centralised forum directory, making it accessible to browsers around the globe. This forum lets you see the names of all the active MultiChat forums – along with the number of participants – with the option to join in. But before you go leaping into a "I Love My Dog" chat, be warned – some of the forums get rather fruity and are not for the faint-hearted!

MultiChat offers two commercial versions, with extra features such as access to chat transcripts, which detail public and private chat room activities on your site. These logs also contain user IP details and entry and exit times. This information can be viewed online or emailed directly to you.

Businesses might find this a useful tool to monitor traffic and

comments about their site – or just to see what people are saying when they're not around!

The Pro version lets you set up password-protected chat – this can be moderated so you can view user IP details, send out warning messages to wayward participants or even boot them off.

The free version will be suitable for most people, and MultiChat is possibly the easiest way to introduce a live chat forum to even humble home pages. It's free, easy to set up, and the only drawback will be your phone bill once you start chatting – it's very addictive!

Mike Slocombe

★★★★★

MultiChat

Price Free

MultiChat Plus £50 per year

MultiChat Pro £158 per year

Pros Easy to set up, great fun, free for most users

Cons Your phone bill will soar

Contact Multisoft

Fax (001703) 442 0211

www.multichat.com





INTERNET SHARING SOFTWARE

Nexland ISB 200e

A simple solution for sharing an Internet connection on your small network

Nexland Internet's ISB200e is a sharing solution for small networks. The basic product requires no special software and works with PC, Mac and UNIX platforms.

Installation is simple, but the absence of any instructions for getting started will leave most novices in trouble. Everything is contained on the CD-ROM and you have to install this first – but there's nothing on paper to tell you this.

Once you've digested the manual, plug the 10Base-T network cable in to the ISB200e and your hub, plug in the mains adapter, and plug a modem (or TA) in to one of the serial ports. I used a PC running Windows 98 – if your TCP/IP setting is installed and set to use an IP address from a DHCP server, it should work fine.

The next step is to use the ISB200e's IP address, 192.168.0.1, to provide it with your ISP details and your type of modem. There's a reasonable list of modems to choose from, but you can always pick the dependable Hayes compatible entry if your modem isn't listed. Once you've done this, simply open your browser or send some email to initiate an Internet connection.

You get all the usual benefits you'd expect from an ISDN LAN modem, including Native Address Translation, simple firewall security protection and DHCP, plus a few extras, such as SNMP network management and email sharing. The ISB200e does more than provide a transparent, shareable PPP connection to the Internet – using the PC redirector software, you can use it to share normal modem and fax traffic.

Dial-In RAS is also supported. Not surprisingly, the ISB200e is highly configurable – you can even exert some control over what

Port Status

Port Status	Internet Access	Phone Line Speed	1: 200
Physical Link	ON	Modem Speed	115200
PPP Link	ON	PPP IP Address	158.152.216.90
User	whatpc		

Modem Log

```

107 ppp up successfully
106: start PPP
105 physical line is connected
104 max phone line speed 31200 bps
103:CONNECT 31200/ARQ/V34/LAPM/V42BIS
102: send "ATDT0845120666"

```

ISB 200e offers control over what people on your network have access to on the Net – people on your network have access to the Net.

The ISB200e does what it says on the box at a reasonable price, but it faces stiff competition – if you already have an ISDN line, it'd be cheaper to buy an entry-level ISDN router than an ISB200e and a terminal adapter.

There are cheaper solutions that are more suitable – proxy server software is cheaper or free, and the second version of Windows 98 has an Internet connection sharing feature. The ISB200e has some neat

tricks that the proxy software lacks – but you have to pay for them.

Roger Gann

★★★

ISB200e

Price £210 + VAT

Pros Simple to use, sophisticated features, flexible

Cons Cheaper solutions are available

Contact SES Computers

Phone (01305) 774 402

www.isb100.com

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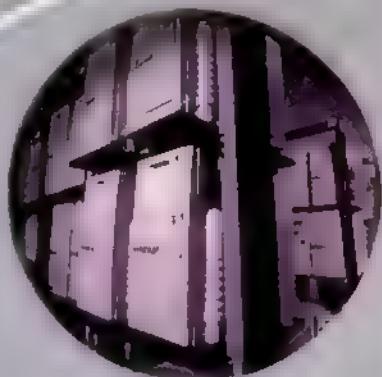
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Internet Magazine is proud to announce an astonishing assembly of prizes. And to win any of them, all you have to do is stick your name and address on a wacky postcard, mark which prize you would like to win and send it us at the editorial address. Or e-mail us at the relevant addresses...Good luck!

#1

COMET Systems
Developers of the Comet Cursor.
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- Get the COMET Cursor
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Join the likes of Warner Brothers, Comedy Central, Mattel, and Universal Studios Online with an exclusive three-year Comet Cursor licence. If you like the idea of having your own cursor that visitors to your site will see instead of the boring old arrow, this is the top prize for you. Comet Systems (www.cometsystems.com) will get their expert cursor designers to work with you on a design of your choice. The company will then employ an implementation team to assist you in the upgrading of your site as well as offering any other assistance that may be required to smoothly implement the Comet Cursor on to your site. This would normally set you back about £30,000 sh. pointything@internet.emap.com

#2

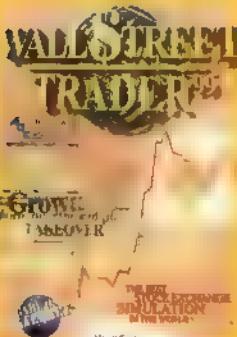


We've got three of the coolest computer gizmos you'll have seen to give away, too. The Smart Office Keyboard is PC compatible and can be rolled up when you're not using it. As such it's completely sealed, meaning you can spill coffee all over and it still works! If you want to order one from Magnate Distribution (www.magnatedistribution.com), one of these excellent inventions will cost you £69.95. roll@internet.emap.com



#3

Those wacky people at Money Fool (www.fool.com), the online personal finance site that doesn't take itself too seriously has given us 25 of their top investment guides (rrp £12.99) and 25 of their fool sh baseball caps to distribute to you, the readers. fool@internet.emap.com



#4

And to test your new-found finance savvy, why not pit yourself against the heady world of stocks and shares in the only realistic Stock Market Simulator. Those clever people at C'sto Multi Media (www.montecristo-multi.com) have created a game where you can save the global market from crumbling, avert crises in Asia, and deal with Second Gulf Wars as well as panic in Russia. You will also make a packet into the bargain. buysell@internet.emap.com

Readers' questions are answered by our panel of experts. Send your query to faq@internet.emap.com



Richard Baguley is our associate editor. He'll answer your technical questions on everything from relational databases to digital signatures.



Mike Slicombe has designed sites for clients that include Snickers, Direct Connection, NCR and Evolution. He also produces *Urban 75*, an irreverent online magazine. Mike will answer all your Web design queries.



Roger Gann is a freelance computer journalist. If you're having trouble with dial-up networking or your 56K modem isn't talking to your ISP, he's your man.



Michael Chissick is the head of Internet and IT law at Field Fisher Waterhouse. He'll be ruling on your legal problems.



Andrew Starling is our technology editor. He'll deal with site creation and telecoms queries.

We regret that we cannot answer any queries other than those printed in the magazine.

Expert help

If you've got a Net problem, email it to us and we'll field it to our distinguished panel of experts. From Web design to legal advice (and let's face it, that would normally cost a fortune), we can answer your questions. We'll also be picking the best reader's tip each month, so get them rolling in – the best one wins a £200 online shopping spree

Size matters

Q I've launched a site promoting my company, which offers Web design and training (www.nathantraining.co.uk). I'd like to know how to design Web pages for all screen sizes, as I tend to favour 640 x 480. Can you tell me the best approach for this?
Anthony Lamont
a.lamont@nathantraining.co.uk

Mike Slicombe replies: There's no such thing as an optimum design size for all screens, because different resolutions will alter your work on different screens.

A site designed to fill the screen using the code `<tablewidth=100%>` might look delightful on a 640 x 480 monitor, but on a 1600 x 1200 screen it'll stretch your text into unreadably long lines, with graphic elements scattered across an expanse of space.

Deciding on a screen size for your site gets more complicated when you consider the growth of PDAs and the promised onslaught of WebTV (only 544 pixels wide). If a frame-based site is optimised for a 1024 x 768 screen, it'll become a frenzy of unworkable and ugly scroll bars on a smaller screen.

Faced with these dilemmas, many designers have settled for a compromise around the 580-600 pixel mark, which will work with the majority of screens.

I've been framed

Q I've constructed a Web site dedicated to my home city of

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Frames, frames and more frames. Marty was kind enough to create this wonderful frames tutorial for you
Begin with the [beginner frames](#), [intermediate frames](#), or if you already know the basics, please visit the [advanced frames](#) section. If you have any specific questions, please visit the [FAQ](#) and section

HTMLcenter has HTML, CSS and graphics tutorials, including basic and advanced frame guides to help you when you get stuck in designing your pages

York (at www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~jdobson) using Netscape Composer and Wordpad. The site runs fine using IE4 and Netscape Navigator, but when the index page is viewed with Netscape, the pages that should load in the main frame tend to load at the bottom of each page. Do you have any ideas on how to resolve this?
Jaimie Dobson
jaimie@jdobson.globalnet.co.uk

Mike Slicombe replies: You've correctly named your content frame in the frameset tag "`<FRAME SRC="home.htm" name="right">`", but the code which links it to the navigation frame ("`<AHREF="links.htm#right">Links Page`") is wrong.

It should read. `<AHREF="links.htm" target="right">`

Q I've been trying to remove Freeserve from my system and was interested to read your response to Tim Crook in the March issue (page 95). Unfortunately, the simple idea of using the standard Add/Remove Programs facility doesn't work. Uninstalling Explorer and Outlook and

Removing Freeserve, again

Q I've been trying to remove Freeserve from my system and was interested to read your response to Tim Crook in the March issue (page 95). Unfortunately, the simple idea of using the standard Add/Remove Programs facility doesn't work. Uninstalling Explorer and Outlook and

essional

reinstalling from your cover CD still results in a version of Outlook Express with 'supplied by Freeserve' in the title bar and the error message 'Internet Explorer cannot open the Internet site www.freeserve.net/email...' when I open the program. I presume there's some sort of personalisation data hiding somewhere on my hard disk. How can I remove this data?

Geoff Bown

geoff.bown@talk21.com

Roger Gann replies: The branding of standard Internet components, such as Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, is common and can be irritating. You can get rid of it when you first install Freeserve on your system. Go to www.freeserve.net/support/cserve_uninstall.htm#1 for advice on how to do a complete removal.

To remove the Freeserve branding from IE4, delete the `5gnup` folder in `c:\program files\internet explorer`. To delete the toolbar motif, delete only the `toolbar.bmp` in this directory.

Removing the branding on Outlook Express is more complicated because it involves editing the Registry – this is something that can cause major problems to your system if you make a mistake, so be extra careful. Always make a backup of your Registry before making any changes.

To remove the branding, select Run from the Start menu and enter REGEDIT. Use its search facility to

Top reader's tip wins £200 voucher

In your June issue, Tim Provost asked you about mounting a search directory on his site, to which Richard Baguley suggested using a Java applet (page 97). I had the same requirement for my site, which is 100Mb and contains over 6500 files. I had installed a JavaScript search engine, but it was rather slow and some browsers couldn't even see it. One of my site editors has a CompuServe account, and all he could see was a black square.

But I've discovered an amazing free service which gives an instant response to your search. It's available from www.freefind.com, which has sent a spider to completely index my site. The index is stored on its server. When your visitors make a search, the query is sent to the index, which means it can give you an instant response. You can even specify how often you want the spider to update.

The presentation of the results pages is fully configurable to match my site, and I can even see what searches have been made so that I can identify the most popular files. To see it in action, visit Music on the Web (UK) at www.musicweb.force9.co.uk/music/music.htm.

Len Mullenger
len@musicweb.force9.co.uk



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Thanks for the tip, Len – most free solutions require a modest amount of technical knowledge, involving customisation of Java applets or CGI scripts, but your solution is far easier.

Len wins himself a £200 shopping spree at top audio-visual online shopping Web site Unbeatable. With over 2,500 products available for your perusal and purchase, it's the place to find everything from a roll of film to a widescreen telly. Backed by mail order specialists, Capital Sound & Vision, all orders are despatched by first class post or next day courier. www.unbeatable.co.uk

unbeatable.co.uk

go to the keys that refer to Freeserve and remove them.

To modify the title of Internet Explorer, go to `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main` and right click on the Window Title to enter your preferred title.

To modify the title of Outlook Express, go to `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Outlook Express` and right click on the Window Title to edit the title.

To remove the Infopane at the bottom of Outlook Express, go to `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Outlook Express` and delete the BodyBarPath key.

You can simply delete the Freeserve icon from your desktop. You can also remove the icon (`freeserve.ico`) from your system – it's in `C:\Windows` directory.

Freeserve entries in the Start menu can be removed from the following directory in Windows Explorer: `C:\Windows\Start Menu\Programs\`Freeserve.

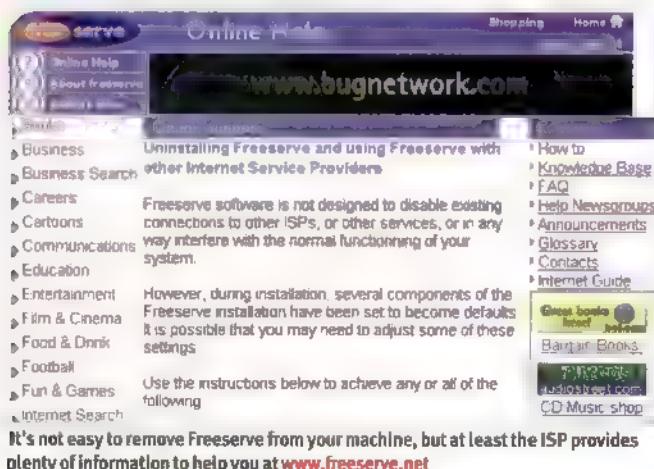
Roger Gann replies: There could be any number of external factors causing your problem. Installing the Dial-Up Networking 1.3 Upgrade should speed up your browsing, not slow it down as you've described.

I checked and couldn't find any problems like yours listed in the Microsoft KnowledgeBase at www.microsoft.com. The upgrade includes all of the features of version 1.2 and the ISDN 1.1 release.

The best solution here would seem to be to remove the upgrade. You can uninstall DUN 1.3 using Add/Remove Programs, but you need to shut down the dial-up server first – here's how.

You need to disconnect because of a feature introduced by the DUN upgrades that lets other PCs dial in to your PC. To disable this facility, open the dial-up networking folder and click Connection, then Dial-Up server and click No caller access.

You should now be able to uninstall the DUN 1.3 upgrade. Failing this, uninstall dial-up networking, reinstall and try again. >



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Uninstalling Freeserve and using Freeserve with other Internet Service Providers

Freeserve software is not designed to disable existing connections to other ISPs, or other services, or in any way interfere with the normal functioning of your system.

However, during installation several components of the Freeserve installation have been set to become defaults. It is possible that you may need to adjust some of these settings.

Use the instructions below to achieve any or all of the following

It's not easy to remove Freeserve from your machine, but at least the ISP provides plenty of information to help you at www.freeserve.net

You've been DUN

Q Since installing a DUN 1.3 upgrade, my browsing speed has reduced significantly. IE 3.02 tends to hang for a long time. I didn't encounter this problem with my original Windows Dial-Up Networking. Also, I can't seem to remove the upgrade – my computer's asking me to close all my connections, disable the server and try again. Can you help me?

Dr. L. Castilla
l.castilla@virgin.net

And you thought it was your company name.



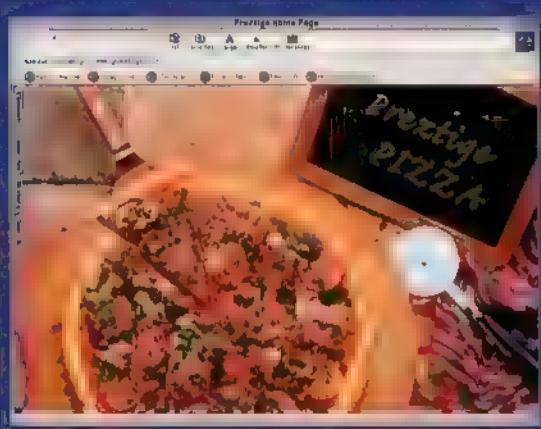
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History lesson

Q Is there any way of making a backup of Internet Explorer's History file? I end up reinstalling Windows every two months due to self-inflicted disasters, and the only thing I can't backup is the History file. I've tried copying the old one over the fresh install, but it comes up with a violation error.

Phil

pd_blue@hotmail.com

Richard Baguley replies: I'm a bit confused by what you mean by the History file, as both IE4 and IE5 store a list of the sites you've visited in the folder windows/history. Every week has a separate sub-directory, and each site has a separate sub-directory within this.

Every page you've visited has a separate Internet shortcut file, and you can copy these to another location. By doing this, at least you'll have shortcuts to the pages you've visited.

Don't forget you can put pages into your favourites list, which is stored in the favourites folder within the windows directory. Again, it's usually a good idea to make a backup copy of this before reinstalling anything.

On the road

Q I want to use my Psion 3c loaded with Psimail Internet software, plus a travel modem, to use email while I'm travelling and working in Australia. I currently use AOL on PCs at work and home, but it can't be used on a Psion, so I'm trying to find an ISP I can use in the UK and abroad without having to pay international call charges.

John

janniecop@aol.com

Richard Baguley replies: I don't know any ISP that has a presence in the UK and Australia, so you'd have to use an ISP in each country. If you were using a laptop, you could use a UK ISP that uses the Global Reach Internet Campaign, at www.gric.com, which lets you use your home account through a foreign ISP.

This requires a client program that needs either Windows or a Mac to run. GRIC has just released software for the Psion, but it'll only run on the new Series 5mx machine, not the earlier models like the one you have. There's no shortage of ISPs in Australia (although none of

Top question wins a pager and Mini-Mail service

Sky high phone bills

Q I ordered a second line from BT and said it would be used mainly for the Internet. A BT engineer appeared the day before installation to check the external cables. I mentioned that I wanted the extra line for Internet use and he said there shouldn't be any problem with access speeds, and that 56K should be possible. On the day of installation, another engineer did the internal cabling and said the same thing. But once the second line was installed, I could only connect at 28.8K – the original line had also been reduced to 28.8K.

I phoned the BT helpline and was told that someone would need to turn up the gain at the exchange. This was done, and an engineer called me to check the line speed was OK, but I was still only getting 28.8K on both lines. I called BT, but all it could say was that line speeds are not guaranteed. I bumped into one of the local BT engineers, and apparently it's used a DACS splitter on the original line, and he said turning up the gain wouldn't make the line speed faster. I've seen several letters in your magazine about this, and I thought you might know of some way to get a faster connection. I did a bit of browsing (slowly) and found an article that suggested asking BT for caller display for three months. Apparently, this is not possible with a DACS line, so it forces BT to give you a proper line. Have you heard of this?

Ivor Thomas

ivor@jogferry.co.uk



Roger Gann replies: BT doesn't give you a guarantee about modem performance over a voice service. But, bearing in mind you made it clear that your second line was to be used for a modem – and the reassurances you were given – I feel you have a strong case for complaining vociferously to BT. When you request a second line, rather than installing a totally new second line from the exchange or local cabinet, BT sometimes attaches a device which allows two telephone lines to share the same cables back to the exchange. This uses a technique known as DACS-2 (Digital Access Carrier Service). DACS is highly unsuitable for use with V.90 modems because it effectively multiplexes two phone lines down a single line.

Unfortunately, DACS introduces two extra digital-to-analogue conversions into the path from your ISP to your location. This leaves you more susceptible to line disconnections and lower connect speeds from your modem.

When you order an extra line for your modem from BT, you should specify that the line is for use with a modem, and that you don't want it to use DACS over your existing line. You should also ensure the BT engineer is aware of this

fact when they arrive to make the installation – your requests seem to have been ignored, Ivor. Turning up the gain can improve poor modem performance, but not in this case. If BT won't respond positively to your complaint, I'd contemplate installing a second line from another telco, such as Cable and Wireless or one of the other cable operators.

they are free), so you could find one that would support your Psion and sign up with them.

There's a complete list of Australian ISPs at http://au.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Companies/Internet_Services/By_Region/Countries/Australia/Complete_Listing

I'd seriously consider an alternative – there are more cybercafés in Australia than you can shake a koala at, so why not use a Web-based email service such as Hotmail or Yahoo mail?

You could access these from any cybercafé or other computer with

Internet access, without having to worry about modems or connectors. There's a good list of Australian cybercafés at http://au.yahoo.com/Regional/Countries/Australia/Business_and_Economy/Companies/Internet_Services/Internet_Cafes.

for advertising my own business services. If it's legal, can I use the site for e-business?

Daman Dev Sood
dbdsood@hotmail.com

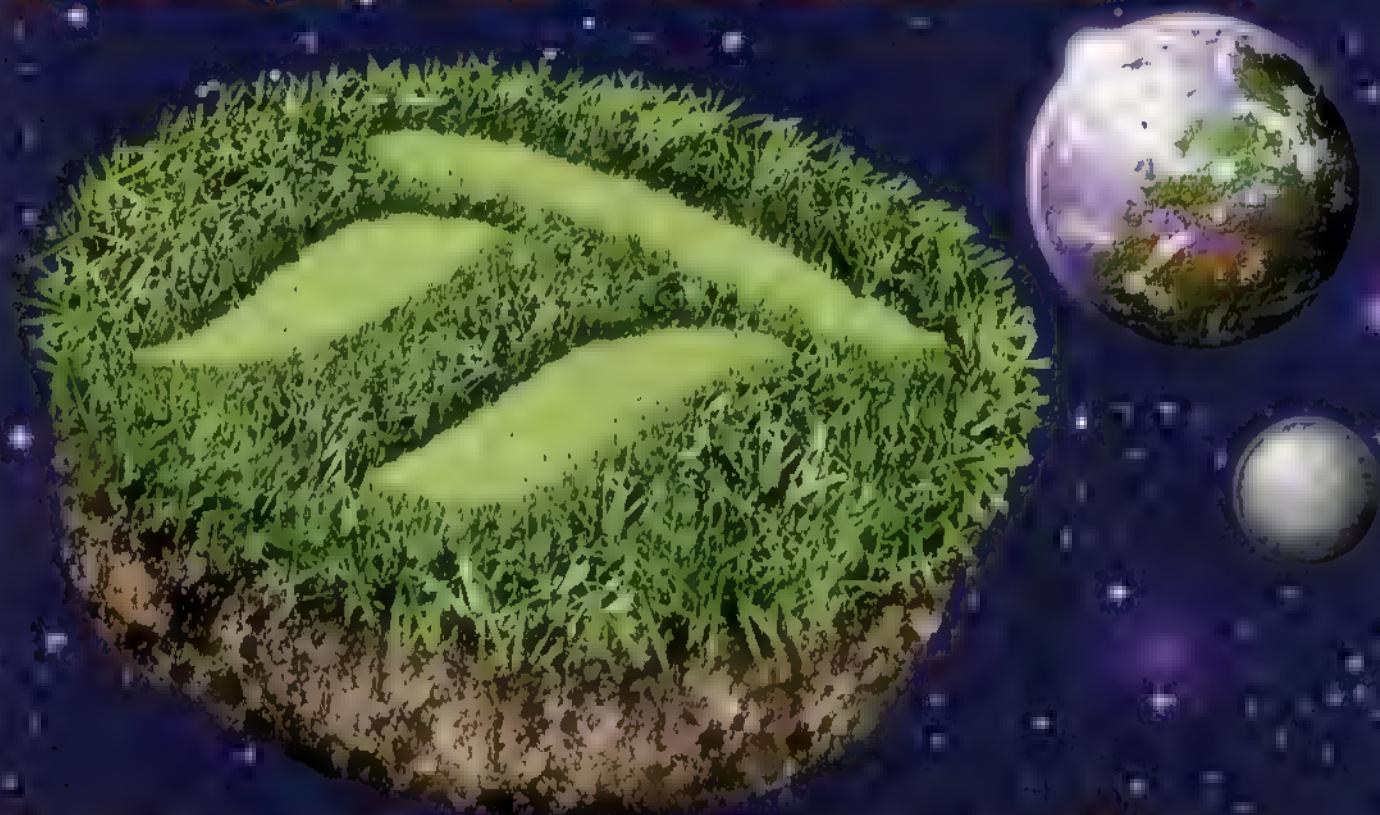
Michael Chissick: If your ISP strictly prohibits you from using your free space for business purposes, you'd be in breach of contract and risk having your service suspended or terminated.

But if free Web space is for 'personal' sites, it's unlikely that an ISP will suspend or terminate your site if it's being used for a small business. But don't forget that ISPs

What can I do with free space?

Q Most ISPs offer free Web space for 'personal' sites. But is it legal to use this for commercial purposes? I'd like to use this space

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have terminated people's services when the site's received vast quantities of traffic.

If in doubt, I'd suggest asking your ISP for permission. If you're allowed to use the site for a small business, there should be no reason why it can't be used for e-commerce activities as well.

Bypassing JavaScript

Q I want to run some JavaScript on my Web site (to change button colours when the mouse passes over it). Is there any way to detect the type of browser my visitors are using, so that people who can't run JavaScript can bypass the code?

Rob Cray
RCray321@aol.com

Andrew Starling replies:

general, browsers that can't deal with JavaScript simply ignore it.

Some antique browsers are tempted to display your JavaScript text on screen because they think it's normal text. Always enclose your script within brackets. Open-ended tags stop the script being displayed, for instance

```
<scriptlanguage="JavaScript">
  <!-- your script here // -->
</script>.
```

You can display a message for people who have their JavaScript disabled. This goes inside noscript tags, like this:

```
<noscript>Some functions of
this page will be
unavailable since your
browser is not JavaScript
enabled.</noscript>
```

This is like the <noframes> tag that only displays a message when it's read by a browser that can't view frames.

Expert Helpline

Unfortunately, we don't have the space to answer all your queries, and sometimes you want a faster answer. Why not try our recommended helpline service? It comes at a premium price, but we think it's worth it.

Calls are charged at £1.50 a minute and you shouldn't be on the phone for more than five minutes. There's even a no quibble, money back guarantee in case you're not satisfied. Just let us know, and we'll make sure you get a refund.

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Legal brief: Tackling the cybersquatters

The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) has published proposals enhancing the protection for famous trademarks on the Internet. Michael Chissick outlines the proposals and questions whether they go far enough

For many years, purchasing Internet domain names has resembled an online gold rush, with sellers operating on a first come, first served basis. Anyone has the right to reserve or buy a top-level domain name for as little as £50. This system has allowed people to buy domain names which are already registered as companies, brands and trademarks for the purpose of selling them at outlandish prices to the businesses concerned - these are known as cybersquatters.



You can see the full report on the World Intellectual Property Organisation's Web site at www.wipo.org

The WIPO has published its report with proposals to enhance the protection of intellectual property online. The report aims to redress the gap between the domain name system and that of intellectual property rights by introducing methods for enforcing and protecting intellectual property rights on the Internet.

Trademark owners will be encouraged by a number of recommendations made in the WIPO report. It will become illegal for cybersquatters to reserve famous companies or well-known trademarks as domain names. But there are no guidelines for deciding which names would qualify for protection. Companies and trademarks such as Sony or McDonalds would be

accepted worldwide as being famous, but there's a grey area of lesser known names and trademarks.

The report suggests that the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) should set up a system whereby owners of registered companies and trademarks can have exclusive use of their names in some or all generic top-level names across a widespread geographical area and across different classes of goods and services.

But this rule would only protect trademark owners from cybersquatters registering their exact name - it wouldn't outlaw typodriven, where look-alike domain names, which might differ slightly by a letter or full stop, are registered in an attempt to drive more traffic to a particular site. The WIPO also proposes that ICANN introduces a process for handling abusive registration of names and acronyms.

Despite its good intentions, the WIPO proposals have several shortfalls. Most notably that the regulations must be applied within the framework of the laws set down by each country to determine what counts as a famous and well-known trademark.

A recent case in Brazil illustrates the need for a worldwide Internet law. The Brazilian ISP America Online Telecommunications won a victory against AOL, the world's biggest ISP. AOL sued the Brazilian company for trademark infringement, claiming it had a right to the domain name aol.com.br. But the judge ruled that it wasn't possible to reserve a top-level domain name for a foreign company not established in Brazil at the time.

Michael Chissick is head of the IT and On-Line Law Group at City law firm Field Fisher Waterhouse. He can be contacted at mpc@ffwlaw.com



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How to broadcast MP3s from your site

You can run your own Internet radio station using Nullsoft's SHOUTcast software – we've even got a step by step guide to help you. **Richard Baguley** spins the MP3 discs on Radio Baggars

The first time you downloaded an MP3 from the Internet, you were probably amazed by how easy it was and how great it sounded on your computer. Now you're ready for the next step – using the MP3 file format to broadcast music, speech or any other sound over the Internet from a live or prerecorded source.

The benefits of this are clear – instead of having to wait for files to download from your Web site, visitors can start listening to your broadcast within a few seconds of clicking on the link. It also means you can broadcast live events – such as concerts or speeches – as they're happening.

Live broadcasting is done by streaming the MP3 file – where the program plays the file as it's received without having to wait for it all to download. It's like listening to the radio instead of having to visit the record shop.

The logistics

Streaming MP3 broadcasting works like this (see Figure 1 – below right). The source takes your sound, which could be taken from an MP3 file, a CD or even live audio from a microphone, and turns it into an MP3 stream. It then sends this data stream to the server, which sends it to all the computers listening to your broadcast.

The source and server can be on the same machine, but they don't have to be, because the two can communicate over the Internet.

This type of broadcasting system is flexible, but it's more complex than just creating an MP3 file. In addition to the software, you'll need a permanent Internet connection, unless you're prepared to put up with some astronomical phone bills.

There are also limits to how many people can listen to your broadcast, especially over a dial-up connection, but we'll come back to this.

We've used the SHOUTcast server software. This nifty piece of software is free if you're using it for non-commercial purposes, otherwise it'll cost you \$299 (around £200). It's produced by Nullsoft (at www.nullsoft.com), the people who brought you the WinAmp MP3 player program.

Setting up the broadcast

So, what do you need to start broadcasting? The first thing to get hold of is the server software. This can be downloaded free of charge from www.SHOUTcast.com and is available for Windows, Linux and various Unix platforms.

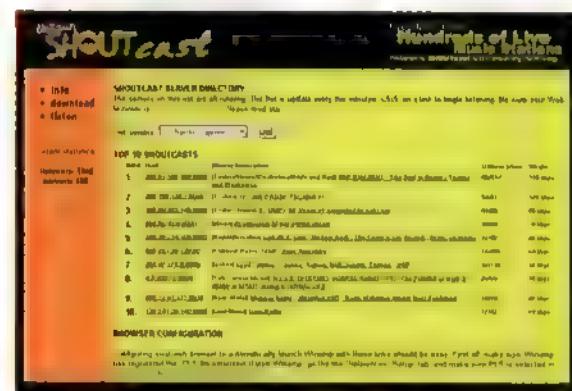
In these days of bloated applications, SHOUTcast is a refreshingly small program – at 67k it shouldn't take more than a minute or so to download.

To install the software, unzip the downloaded file into a directory (called SHOUTcast, for instance). Before you run the server, check the init alias on file (SC_serv.ini) and make sure it's set up to be used with your system.

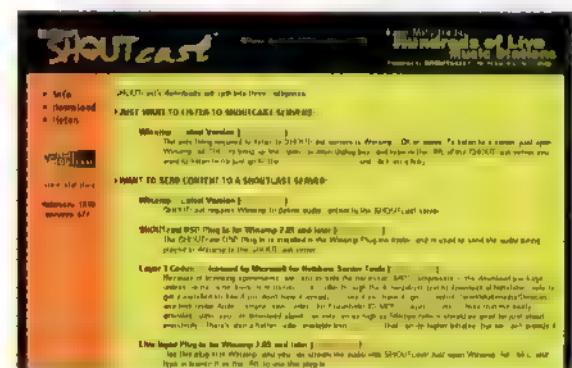
You'll have to change the password (which is used to control access to the server) by editing the line which reads password=changeme and changing the last bit to your chosen word. You might need to change the maxuser entry as well – this sets the maximum number of users who'll be able to tune in to your broadcast at any one time.

The next step is to set up the source. You'll need a copy of WinAmp's MP3 program. You can download this from www.winamp.com and install it, if you don't already have a copy on your system.

Once that's done, you'll need to download a plug-in program which adds extra functions to WinAmp. This takes the MP3 data and transmits it to the server. The SHOUTcast DSP plug-in is available from www.SHOUTcast.com/download.html.

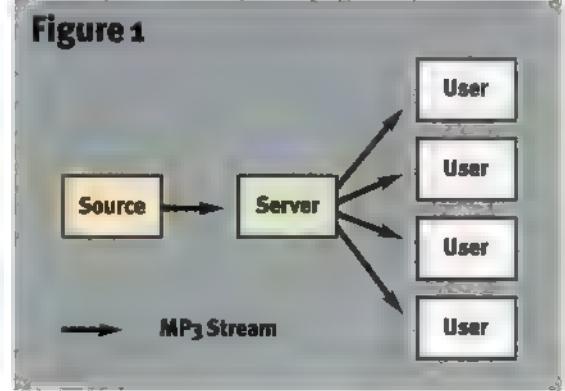


SHOUTcast automatically adds your broadcast to its list of MP3 broadcasts at <http://yp.shoutcast.com>



The downloads on the site let you listen to SHOUTcast servers, send content to a SHOUTcast server and run one yourself

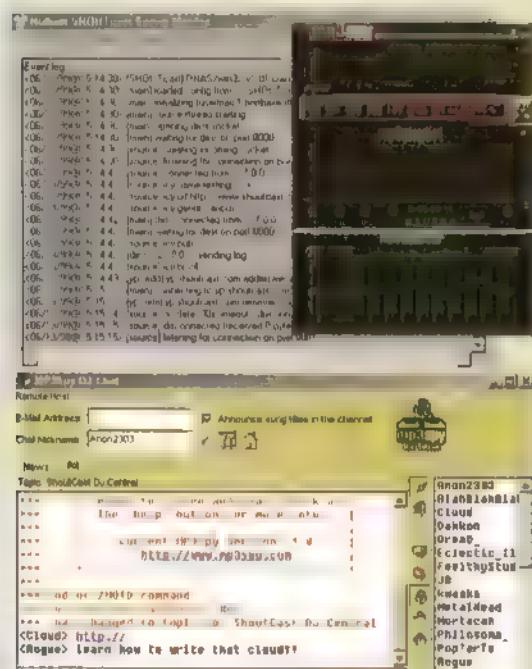
Figure 1



How to set up an MP3 broadcast

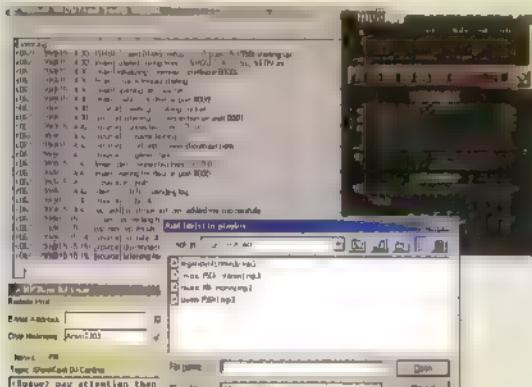
Once you've installed and configured your software (with the help of this article), you can start broadcasting your MP3s to the world. In this example, we've used SHOUTcast, WinAmp and the MP3 Spy DJ plug-in to add broadcast sound and music to your Web site

Step 1



Make sure the server is up and running. Start up WinAmp. The MP3 Spy DJ plug-in also starts up automatically and connects you to a chat group for aspiring MP3 DJs.

Step 2



Create the playlist—the music you want to play. In this example there are only three, but the playlist can contain as many entries as you want. If the repeat option is selected, the songs will play in order, then start again from the top.

Download this, then unz p the files into the plug-ins directory of the WinAmp folder (which is usually in C:/program files, winamp, plug-ins).

You'll now need the MP3 codec (which creates the MP3 stream). For legal reasons, this isn't included with WinAmp or the server, so you'll have to download it separately. Nullsoft recommends you get hold of it by downloading Microsoft's NetShow server toolkit—there's a link to it from Nullsoft's download page. If you download and install this, it'll add an MP3 codec to your system. You don't have to run the Microsoft software—it just has to be installed on your machine.

Configuring your setup

You're now ready to begin broadcasting from your site. Start the server, which will bring up a status window to show you what it's doing. Start up WinAmp and press Ctrl-P to bring up the WinAmp preferences window.

Click on Plug-ins and DSP Effect. You'll see the SHOUTcast DSP plug-in listed. Select the plug-in, then click on Configure at the bottom of the window.

This'll bring up another window where you enter the details of the server you want to connect to. If it's on the same machine, leave the SHOUTcast server box as it is. If it's on another machine, enter its IP address.

Enter your password, then click on the Encoding format button. This lets you select what type of encoding you want to use. Remember that a high bandwidth gives you better quality, but it also means you'll need a larger net connection.

Finally, enter your details in the server information boxes. When you start broadcasting, your server will be listed on the SHOUTcast Web site (at <http://yp.SHOUTcast.com>), so people can see what sort of music you're going to be broadcasting.

Ready to go

Now you can begin. Close the preferences windows and press L to open an MP3 file. When the file starts to play, you should see the server status window list messages, such as "[source] connected from 127.0.0.1", which shows it's receiving the data from the source.

You can then test the server by going to another computer, opening WinAmp, pressing Ctrl-L and entering the IP address of the server and the port number that the server's running on.

These will look something like 192.27.242.1:8000—just replace the first

part with the IP address of the server. You should then hear the MP3 file being transmitted. Congratulations, you're broadcasting over the Internet.

Linking to your pages

Once everything is up and running, you might want to add a link to the broadcast from your Web pages. This is easy to do. Create a link in exactly the same way as you'd create a link to another Web page, except this one will link to a WinAmp playlist file. The HTML for a typical link would look like this:

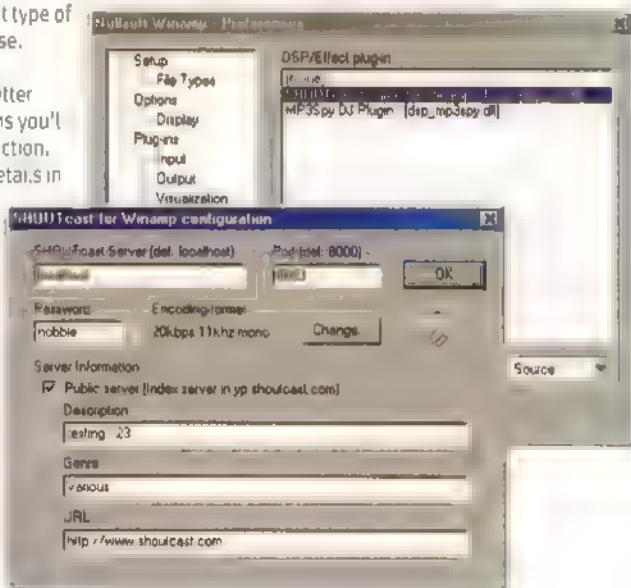
`href="http://www.myradiostation.com/myradiostation.pls">Click here to listen to radio Baggies!`

This would link to the playlist file (called myradiostation.pls), which is a text file that contains code like this:

`[playlist]
NumberOfEntries=1
File1=http://shoutcast.myradiostation.com:8000`

Shoutcast.myradiostation.com is the name of the computer which the SHOUTcast server is running on, so replace this with the name of your server machine. If it doesn't have one, use the IP address (such as 192.27.242.1).

Save this as a text file with the suffix .pls, put it on the server and create a 'click here' link on your Web page, as outlined above. When someone clicks on



The configuration window lets you enter details of the server you want to connect to and the encoding you want to use

this link, the browser will launch WinAmp and connect to your broadcast. Your visitors will need to have WinAmp installed on their computer, so you might also want to put a link to the WinAmp site (www.winamp.com) so they can download the software before tuning in to your broadcast.



Producing your playlist

Turn the MusicTicker up... and party down

If you're playing a great song at the exact moment someone is looking at your Web pages, they can click on the link and start listening to it immediately.

This can be done by using Atul Varma's MusicTicker WinAmp plug-in. Like the MP3Spy plug-in, this program adds functions to WinAmp. In this case, it automatically generates a Web page which gives the name of the track that's playing and a list of the last few tracks played. Every few seconds (you can specify how often), it looks up the names of the tracks being played, creates a Web page listing them and automatically puts it on the Web server. It's a good example of how WinAmp can be expanded.

MusicTicker can also create playlists by intelligently sorting the songs that will be played on your broadcast in the same way as radio stations do. For instance, it can make sure you don't play

MusicTicker

two songs by the same artist one after the other, or that you don't play the same song twice in the same hour.

Setting it up can be fiddly, as you have to change things in an .INI file, which isn't particularly intuitive. But it does mean you can alter most aspects of the pages the plug-in generates, including creating your own design and adding your own graphics.

Although it works pretty well (and the source code is also available), remember that MusicTicker is still a beta product, so it's by no means bug-free. It's still worth testing, though, if you're serious about broadcasting. All you have to do is put a link to Varma's pages on your Web site.

You can download the MusicTicker plug-in from www2.kenyon.edu/People/varmaa/mticker.

can be set to play in turn, so you can configure the program to playing a series of files and leave it running while you get on with something else.

Playlists can be created with WinAmp and saved to disk. You can set it to repeat, so the program will keep playing the list of files you've selected. Playlists can be as long as you want, so you can schedule several hours of music in advance.

Both SHOUTcast and WinAmp have Software Development Kits, which are available free of charge. You can use them to write your own software that might, for instance, let visitors to your site request songs, produce charts of their most popular requests, or send in their own songs.

If this is beyond your resources, check out the MP3 DJ Tool's plug-in. This handy add-on to WinAmp lets you do lots of clever things, including automatically setting up chat rooms for your broadcast so you can keep in touch with your

The source of the broadcast

This setup will let you broadcast MP3 files, but you might want to expand this to do live broadcasts from a microphone, or even broadcast straight from the mixing desk at a concert. This can be done by downloading different input plug-ins for WinAmp (from www.winamp.com/winamp/plug-ins), which can be used to broadcast from different sources, such as direct from CD, from FM radio cards or even from RealAudio files.

The most useful plug-ins probably are the Line input for the SHOUTcast plug-in, which lets you broadcast anything you plug into your soundcard, which could be a microphone, tape or record deck. You can download it from www.shoutcast.com/download.html.

Setting up playlists

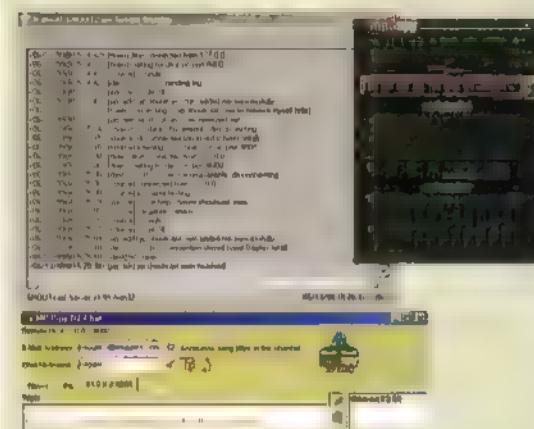
WinAmp has another great feature which will help you automate the process of running your station – playlists. These are lists of MP3 files which the program

Other alternatives

SHOUTcast is not the only system for audio broadcasts over the Internet. Real Networks' G2 system broadcasts audio and video. There's a free version of the G2 server software, although it's limited to a maximum of 25 listeners, which you can use for live broadcasts using a free version of the Real Producer software. All this software can be downloaded from www.real.com, and many Internet radio stations run both MP3 and Real Networks versions of their broadcasts. Another alternative is Microsoft's Windows Media system (which you can download from www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia), which Microsoft claims is superior to MP3, with better sound quality and smaller files. Again, you can download the server and the programs used to create the files free of charge.

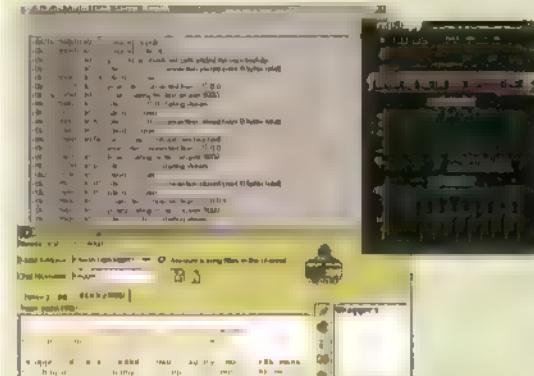
How to set up an MP3 broadcast

Step 3



You're ready to broadcast. When the play button is pressed, the songs will begin to play, WinAmp will connect to the server, and the server will add you to the list of broadcasters on the SHOUTcast Web pages (at <http://yp.shoutcast.com>). The MP3 DJ Plug-in automatically creates a new chat room for your broadcast, which anyone using MP3 Spy can join.

Step 4



The MP3 Spy plug-in changes the topic of the chat room to the name of the song that's playing, so people know what they're listening to. The track listing is determined by the ID3 tag, which holds details like artist and song title, or the name of the MP3 file, so make sure these are accurate.



Step 5

You can also have a Web page that's automatically updated with the name of the track that's being played by using the MusicTicker plug-in. See the Producing the playlist box at the top of this page for more details of how you can do this on your own site.

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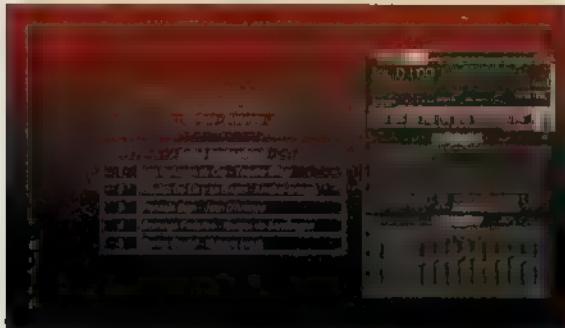
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MP3 radio broadcasts



1 Radio Tango Argentine www.radiotango.com
 Round the clock tango music. It'll make you want to put a flower between your teeth, grab a Latin lover and whirl across the floor

2 Cracked Radio www.cracked.net
 A new station which shows how good MP3 can be. The site also lists the last 10 songs played and lets you make requests

3 Daft RepRuhZent <http://daft.repruhzent.com>
 A house, techno and trance site, which broadcasts at a high bandwidth (often 128kbps), so you'll need either an ISDN or leased line to connect

4 Live police scanner www.pc1host.com/scanner
 A live broadcast from a police radio scanner in Georgia, USA. Listen in as the cops order more doughnuts and chase axe-wielding murderers and tax disc offenders

5 Star Wars multimedia site <http://168.229.236.6/~cc/index.html>
 Selections from the soundtrack albums of all four Star Wars films, including *Episode I: The Phantom Menace*

listeners. You can do a live mix between music and a microphone, and become the DJ you've always wanted to be. You can even get instant feedback on the number of people tuning into your broadcast

Bandwidth blues

Running your own internet radio station can be a lot of fun, but there are limits to what you can and can't do. The main restriction is the size of your audience. The more people you want to be able to listen in, the bigger connection to the Internet you need. You have to send MP3 data to every person listening to your broadcast, which takes up a considerable amount of your connection.

If you broadcast at a transmission rate of 20kbps, for instance, each of your listeners would require 20kbps of your connection for the MP3 data.

So if you want 10 people to be able to listen to your broadcast, you'll need at

least a 200kbps connection. In fact, you're likely to need more than this, because the process of sending and receiving data uses up some of the capacity of your connection, so a more practical rate would be 300kbps.

Since the fastest modem will give you a 56kbps connection, if you're lucky (it's more like 45kbps), only one or two people will realistically be able to tune into your broadcast. Even if you have an ISDN line, you'll still only be able to have three or four listeners. It's only with a leased line or a cable modem that you'll be able to hit double figures.

Fortunately, there are ways around this. Remember that the server and the source don't have to be on the same machine, and if you have a server located within an ISP's network, you could use another machine to do the transmitting.

If you were broadcasting a concert, you could have a server running at your

ISP, while you use a laptop with a dial-up connection and a microphone to record the music. This would create the MP3 stream, so when you send this to the server, it could be rebroadcast to the rest of the Internet.



You'll find plenty of programs to help you produce and broadcast MP3s on our free cover CD

Keep it legal

Remember the laws of copyright when you're using SHOUTcast or any other MP3 program. If you start broadcasting music or any sound which you don't have permission to use, you're breaking the law, and could be taken to court by the owner of the copyright. So, if you start broadcasting your entire CD collection to the world, don't be surprised if several gentlemen wearing suits and carrying briefcases knock on your door and mention the word 'prosecution'.

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Get your site to take credit cards

You might have a great product, but you'll need to know about setting up credit card transactions before you can sell anything on the Internet. **Davey Winder** explains how adding credit card facilities to your site can make all the difference and keep people coming back

If you want to join the e-commerce revolution on the Internet, there's one vital resource you can't afford to be without – the ability to accept credit card payments via your site. Ignore this one business essential and you might as well set up a stall in your local market. Without this, your customers will skip quickly to the next site on the hit list.

Merchant status

Taking credit card payments online can

These people are still living in the pre-Amazon and Dell days, when Internet trading was perceived as high-risk and low-profit. Unsurprisingly, the credit card companies and card acquirers only favoured big companies with a well-established trading history. But the Web has changed completely since these days. The success of Amazon and Dell has forced the credit card industry to sit up and take notice, because they can't afford to ignore the kind of money being spent online.

The truth is, although it's far easier than before, dealing with the banks and credit card companies to get your merchant account for online trading can be tricky. It's more difficult if you haven't got a squeaky clean trading history in a business that takes payments face to face in the real world. And even then, translating this experience into the world of Cardholder Not

Present (CNP) transactions on the Internet isn't a foregone conclusion.

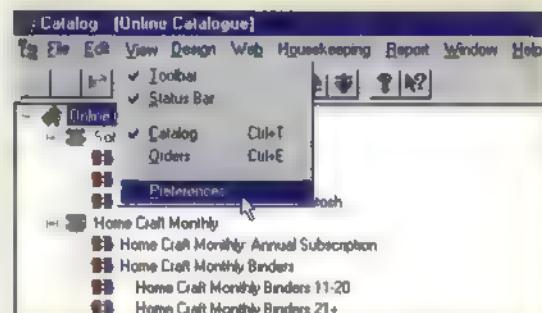
You might have already completed the exhaustive risk assessment process of the acquiring bank, such as Barclays Merchant Services, Lloyds ➤

Mastercard (at www.mastercard.com) has embraced the Web as an important revenue source in the future. Barclays Merchant Services (at www.barclaysm merchant services.co.uk) is also taking the Internet seriously.

sound like an administrative nightmare that requires technical excellence. If you listen to some Internet old-timers, you'd think acquiring merchant status was like the search for the holy grail – good in theory, but impossible in practise.

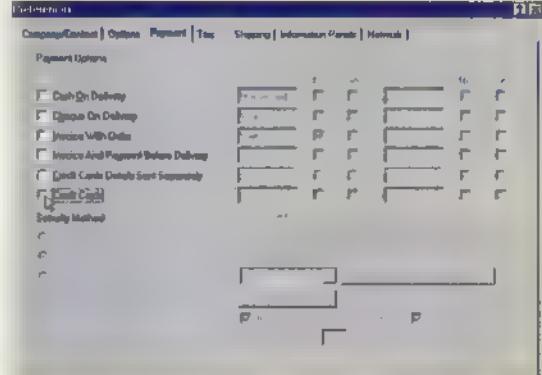
How to set up credit card payments

Step 1



Integrating credit card payment processing into your Web site is made simple if you use one of the excellent shop-front software packages now available. In this example we have used Actinic Catalog 3 to highlight the simple steps involved and show just how painless the process can really be. Use Actinic Catalog to construct your product database, and from the main screen menus select View/Preferences.

Step 2



Click on the Payment tab to bring the relevant options screen in view, and you will see that all manner of payment types can be enabled. You could opt to choose the Credit cards details sent separately option if you don't mind being seen as something of an Internet dinosaur, as this involves offline processing of the card transaction with the cardholder details being faxed or phoned in. However, we know you better than that, so hit the plain Credit cards option instead.

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How to set up credit card payments

Step 3

Customer Center Options Payment Tax Shipping Management Tools Help						
Payment Options		Credit Cards Accepted		Image File		
		Name	Image File No.	Star Date	Image File Name	Star Date
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cash On Delivery	✓-aa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Check Or Electronic	✓-bb	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Invoice With Credit	✓-cc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Automatic And Payment Before Delivery	✓-dd	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Credit Card Details Enter Separately	✓-ee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Credit Cards	✓-ff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Security Methods						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Active: In-Bill Encryption	<input type="text"/>				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SSL	<input type="text"/>				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Online Credit Card Processing	<input type="text"/>				

Selecting the credit cards option makes further selections available, including the ability to choose which cards you can accept. You will also notice that the Security Method section of the screen has become accessible, offering choices between Actinic's built in encryption, the industry standard SSL (if you are handling offline card processing yourself) or Online Credit Card Processing. You need to select the latter in order to register and configure your Payment Services provider details for online processing.

Step 4

Payment Options	Check	Bank Transfer	Credit Card	Debit Card	Wire Transfer	PayPal	Other
Cash On Delivery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check/Email Delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Invoice With Credit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Invoice And Payment Before Delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Credit Cards Details Sent Separately	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Credit Cards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Security Method							
Apply in-store prepayment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SSL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delete Credit Card Prepayment							
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="margin: 0;">Delete Credit Card Prepayment</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Select an MCC Prepayment here. For information about the provider click "Information and registration" where you can also register for an account. Click "Configure" to enter your account details.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100%;"> <p style="margin: 0;">MCC Prepayment</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Configure</p> </div>							

Once you tick the Online Credit Card processing checkbox, you can select from the drop down list of partner PSPs who have agreements with Actinic. If you already have an agreement with one of them you can select it and go straight to the configuration box to enter all your security and registration details. Otherwise, click on the Information and Registration button to be taken directly to the service's Web site.

Step 5

Customer Contact		Customer	Product	Cart	Shipping	Information Panels	Logout
Marketing Message							
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;">     </div>							
About Us		Making a Purchase	Shipping & Handling	Delivery Schedule	Batch Orders		
1st Class Shipping		Credit Card Security	Customer Support	Refusing Us	Privacy Policy	Return/Exchange Terms	
<p>We know if you're dissatisfied, you'll want to send us an email and let us know using our shopping system over the Internet. All credit and numbers are encrypted so the information when the order is placed using 128 bit encryption. This site is only decrypted after they reach our computer. They will not be in clear text on any web site.</p>							

When you've been approved for online trading, set up your relevant accounts with the Payment Services Provider and configured Actinic Catalog accordingly, there's one more thing you should consider doing before sitting back and waiting for the cash to start flowing in your direction. Click on the Information Panels tab of the Preferences screen, and then the Credit Card Security tab. Here you can edit the text that is seen when customers want to make a credit card payment. It could make all the difference...

The screenshot shows the ACTINIC website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, News, Support, Contact, Search, and Site Finder. Below the navigation is a large banner with the text 'ACTINIC Everything you need to sell on the Net'. To the left of the banner is a sidebar with links for Products, Business to one-to-one Business, Register for more information, Company Profile, and Press Center. The main content area features a quote: "Excellent choice for businesses looking to build an online storefront". Below the quote is a 'PC Week, #1/9399' badge. The central part of the page has a 'Actinic Catalog' section with a 'View Catalog' button and a 'Download Catalog' link. To the right is a 'Find out more about Actinic's Partner Programmes' section with a 'Case Study' badge for London Symphony Orchestra. At the bottom, there's a 'See the only' badge.

Actinic (www.actinic.co.uk) is one of the new breed of software solutions companies that provide an all in one, off the shelf electronic shop front product. It provides integrated partnerships with PSPs for credit card transactions.

Cardnet, Midland Card Services or NatWest Streamline Merchant Services. But a CNP classification is a different kettle of fish, and you might have to do the whole thing again. Your cause is helped if you've already dealt with other CNP transactions, such as mail order or telephone ordering. If you have, the merchant acquirer might do a quick reassessment and re-negotiation of the agreement terms to cover their additional, perceived risk.

If you're starting a new business, or you've only been trading for 12 months and have few tangible assets, you'll have to undergo a thorough assessment. This includes technical matters, such as SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) implementation and secure storage of cardholder details behind a good firewall, as well as the type of product you'll be selling and compliance with the Consumer Credit Act. The latter often comes as a surprise to the uninitiated - after all, what's the difference between selling software and used cars? Well, high value consumer electronics are a prime target for fraudsters, so you're trading history would have greater significance in this instance.

If you're thinking about trading in the gambling or adult entertainment sectors, you won't be welcomed with open arms by the card acquirers. This is seen as selling goods that aren't yours, because you're acting as a fulfilment house or taking orders on a speculative basis.

Industry insiders say around 50 percent of card transactions on pornography sites end up as chargebacks—that is, nothing is paid for the purchase. You have to look at it from the card acquirer's side of things—they're simply assessing the level of risk they're taking by letting you do business online, and balancing that risk against the potential profit they'll make out of the bargain.

Setting up a merchant account with a card acquirer can be expensive, with a

typical fee of £200 to process your app. call on, with no guarantee of acceptance. On top of that, you're looking at an annual fee, which will vary upon your circumstances and the acquirer you use - it won't be less than another £200. Add to this to their charge of 5 per cent per sale, and the costs start to pile up. The biggest drawback, though, is their liking for 'floor limits', which restrict the value of sales

New companies and PSP

Of course, many businesses that want to sell via the Web are new companies that are keen to exploit the global trading opportunities offered by the medium. If you haven't got merchant status, you might find yourself hitting your head against a brick wall, trying to persuade a card acquirer to give it to you. Don't panic – you'll just need to turn to the unsung heroes as far as e-commerce is concerned. Without the Payment Service Provider (PSP) companies, there would be far more bust than boom.

A third party PSP works by acting as a transaction broker – it deals with the authorisation and collection of funds in return for a percentage of each sale. Your customers fill in an online form on your site and a payment script transfers this information to the PSP secure server – a seamless, invisible process that provides secure transactions.

Your customer doesn't know they've left your site, while you gain the benefit of using a secure transaction server without having to purchase and install one yourself. The PSP sends email confirmations to both the customer and the merchant and your payment is credited within a few seconds – payments are either batch processed overnight or on a weekly basis. As with any third-party agreement, it can impact negatively on your business if their business screws up, so make sure you ask the PSP the right questions.



Home Products & Services Offers & Promotions Consumer Tips For Businesses New Technologies About Visa

Internet Shopping

MAIN > CDS MER > MERCHANT > SHIP NOW > SEL RTY > NEWS

Merchant

Partner with Visa and start using the Internet to increase sales and expand your customer base. Where else can you grow your business, reach customers all over the world, and save money at the same time? Annual online sales in the US and Europe alone are predicted to grow from \$3.5 billion today to upwards of \$15 to \$20 billion by the year 2000, according to Forrester Research. And as the world's largest and most trusted consumer payment system, Visa is the most popular way for consumers to purchase



Visa (www.visa.com) has plenty of information for the aspiring Internet merchant at its Web site

- Can I handle simultaneous transactions?
- Are there any limits on the numbers of transactions that can be made per hour, day or week?
- What kind of cards and currencies does the PSP accept?
- How does it handle sales tax and VAT?
- How long does it take to process and administer your application?
- Do you need merchant status or not?
- What kind of service level agreement can it offer you?
- What percentage of your sales does it charge?
- Do you have to pay a start up fee?
- What about monthly fees and monthly minimum charges?
- How easy is it to audit your transaction history?
- How many clients does the PSP have and can it give some examples?
- Can it pass on details of companies willing to provide service references?

And while you're asking probing questions of the collected PSPs, you might as well toss the old chestnut of deferred payments onto the fire. Why on earth would you want to defer payment, you might be wondering? Simple, if you take an order for an item that can't be despatched at once, you're legally forbidden from processing that payment until you're capable of fulfilling the order.

One way to get around this is to implement a shopping cart linked to your stock database – this tells the customer the item's in stock. This isn't an option for a new business on a budget.

It's better to put the pressure on the PSP to provide a deferral service instead – they're slowly coming to terms with deferrals, and should know what you're talking about and be willing to discuss the possibilities with you. WorldPay already provides this service, although it's created some built-in safeguards for the PSP – for instance, all orders which haven't been completed within a seven-day period are cancelled.

The online/offline authorisation debate

Deciding between online and offline transaction authorisation really shouldn't take you long if you have any true notion of the value of Internet commerce to your customers. This is truly a one horse race, and offline authorisation is the pony heading for the glue factory.

The Web ferments an expectation of immediacy, and nowhere is that expectation greater or more important than e-commerce. Online authorisation provides immediate credit card verification – an instant hit informs the customer that the transaction has been successful, that the order has been placed and that it's on its way. I've found myself in that nightmare scenario where I've made an order, assumed it's been accepted and the transaction completed (because the online shop told me so), only to have an email drop into my mailbox the next day informing me that my card details had not been authorised.

It turns out I'd transposed two digits when entering the information. But this error would have been recognised by online authorisation – my card would have been denied and I would've realised the mistake and left a happy customer. As it was, I simply couldn't be bothered to go back to the site and repeat the ordering process all over again – the shop lost a sale because it hadn't embraced the golden rule of e-commerce – immediacy is king.

This rule exists for your benefit as well as that of the customer. Online authorisation helps you filter out the fraudsters, especially if it's coupled with additional failsafe measures, such as address verification.

Processing authorisations offline might be cheap to implement – especially if you already have the systems in place to deal with mail order or telephone orders – but it's not the best option. >

Payment service providers guide

When you're assessing the various PSP services, don't get hypnotised by the lure of the cheapest setup fee or the lowest transaction percentages – you could find yourself trapped in the jaws of an agreement you wish you hadn't entered. You should always look at the whole package and how it applies to your circumstances, as well as scalability for future growth.

There are some obvious pitfalls to avoid, such as contracts that make you pay transaction fees on sales that fail to be authorised, silly minimum fees regardless of your volume of sales, and a lack of any quantification of service and support levels. There are new services swelling the ranks of the PSP market every month, but there are some more renowned players whose names crop up more than once when you're talking to e-commerce businesses. The most popular of these are featured below.



WorldPay

www.worldpay.com

One of the largest online transaction processors. Annual fees of £125, with fees guaranteed not to exceed more than 4.5 per cent of each transaction value, and free technical support – which is important. WorldPay also offers multi-currency support, an important option that shouldn't be overlooked if you want to trade in the Internet's global market.



BANK ON THE ICON



NetBanx

www.netbanx.com

NetBanx is another of the big players. Setup fees for the service start at £75, but this price is based on a company that only has one product for sale. Realistically, the setup fees start at £300 for the Supported Ordering Platform option, which works in tandem with off the shelf shopping and catalogue products, such as Actinic Catalog. Transaction fees range from three per cent to 12 per cent of sales, with minimum monthly payments of £600.



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Prices exclude VAT (where applicable) and are based on annual contracts. Speed trials were based on independent testing of 72 UK hosting companies by Zeus Technologies in April 1999. Standard Nominet Fee is £80 for two years. All trademarks acknowledged. E&OE

If your Internet business has any measure of success, you'll soon find yourself bogged down by this legacy approach to payment processing. Another problem is off-line authorisation isn't completely secure – remember you're storing cardholder details on your systems, so you're a prime target for any information superhighwaymen that come your way.

Online authorisation doesn't mean you have to spend a small fortune on building a system of secure servers – you need an X.25 line into the banking system, software approval from your bank, and a custom programming script to link it all together. Thankfully, the online solution lies in using a PSP, and the price you pay (a percentage of every sale) is relatively small compared to savings in time and hassle. Your visitors will also regard you as a mature and professional business that they'll use again.

The SSL factor

Security can never be over-stressed – especially to the consumer, who naturally worries about supplying their credit card details. The most widely used system, and the Internet standard when it comes to securing online payments, is SSL – the Secure Sockets Layer. This encryption protocol has become the *de facto* model because it works well, and the vast majority of people shopping on the Web will use an SSL-enabled browser client by default.

The premise is that all messages sent between client and a server running SSL are encrypted. The customer is made aware of the change from open to secure status in their browser, either by notification on the page, such as "You're now connected to a secure server" or by

a change in the browser client secure server status icon (the familiar padlock or key symbol).

The best sites will combine the two methods of notification, so customers are left in no doubt about the security of the server they're connected to. In practice, this works by the server identifying the "checkout" or "pay now" link, which has been requested by the client as an SSL request (it'll carry an `https://` prefix), and routing that request to the SSL-enabled server. This establishes an encrypted link between client and server, so the transaction details to be transferred safely.

As a merchant, you can either run your own secure server, lease space on a secure server operated by your Web host, or make use of a specialist Payment Services Provider. If you choose to run your own secure server, remember that customer credit card details will not be encrypted – the encryption occurs in the link between server and client. You must safeguard this data using a firewall and/or transfer to a secure computer that's not connected to the Internet.

And finally

So there you have it – enabling credit card transactions on your e-commerce site is relatively straightforward, and not complicated or expensive enough to prevent you from investigating the possibilities. You've got some legwork to do, but compared to getting your site up and running in the first place, it's a virtual stroll in the park, and the rewards are too valuable to ignore.

Davey Winder is a former Technology Journalist of the Year, author and new media consultant. He can be reached at davey@happygeek.com

Transactional design

Your customers can still feel confused, intimidated or insecure if you haven't given enough thought to site design issues. If you're using an off the shelf solution, such as Actinic Catalog, the design should be built in, but if you're creating your own bespoke solution, you need to consider the following transaction essentials.

At the checkout stage, move the proceedings to a secure link using SSL and ensure this is made clear to your customers to alleviate any security fears they might have. Create an online form which seamlessly passes the transaction details to the PSP, so your customers think they've never left your site. This form should make it clear that when they hit the "Order Now" button, they're entering into the payment phase and there's no turning back.

Once authorisation is received, your customers should be presented with a confirmation page that thanks them for their order and provides them with all relevant order details, such as order number, email and telephone contacts in case of query and estimated delivery times.

Don't forget to include a link back to the shop front so the customer can continue shopping if they wish!

At this stage, you should also generate an email copy of this confirmation and send it to the customer, to reassure them that the order has gone through. Many of your customers will be new to, or weary of, online shopping, and these small measures provide the handholding and customer service that will ensure that they'll remain loyal and come back to your site.

Payment service providers guide

Authority

www.radsgroup.com/authority

This PSP will cost you £375 per year plus a fixed transaction charge of three per cent. The catch is the support – the basic email support and software upgrade option is another £250 per year, and if you want to talk to someone on the phone, it's a total of £1,000 per year. Authority also has a minimum sale limit of £9.95, and transaction payments to

the merchant are processed overnight with the responsibility on the merchant to collect and process these.

AUTHORITY



Secure Trading

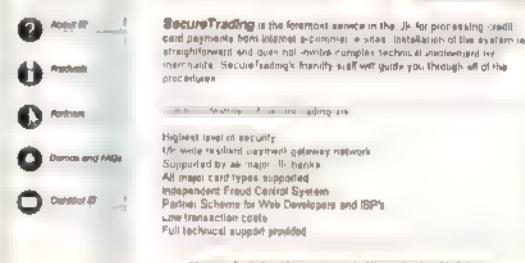
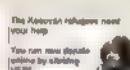
www.securetrading.com

One of the cheaper PSPs, Secure Trading has an entry-level service that costs just £99 per year with a fixed fee of 5p per transaction, irrespective of value. There's also a degree of flexibility in the exact costs involved, and in the help available to users of other shopping carts or database products who want to integrate the Secure Trading service into theirs. It could be worth investigating.



secure trading

electronic commerce for the internet



eBanx

www.ebanx.net

Another new entry into the PSP market is eBanx, which charges a handling fee of 5 per cent for all transactions, plus a rather steep set up fee of £595. But there's no monthly costs and various added extras on offer, from address verification to spending pattern reporting.



ePDQ

Barclays ePDQ

www.epdq.com

At the start of this year, Barclays took the opportunity of joining the Internet-specific PSPs by launching its ePDQ service. It's a virtual PDQ (Parallel Data Query) terminal for SMEs who want to get up and running on the Web with the minimum of fuss. This involves installing the ePDQ software on your secure server you're responsible for the cardholder information while it resides there, and you can administer deferred authorisations yourself, just as with an ordinary real Barclays PDQ card terminal. Costs to consider are a one-off set up fee of £500, monthly management fees of £40 and transaction fees that vary according to turnover (less than £250,000 is three per cent and more than £1 million is one per cent to give you an indication).

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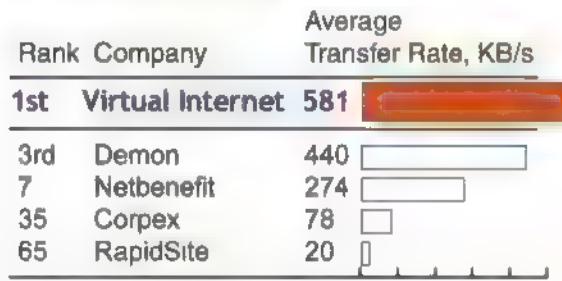
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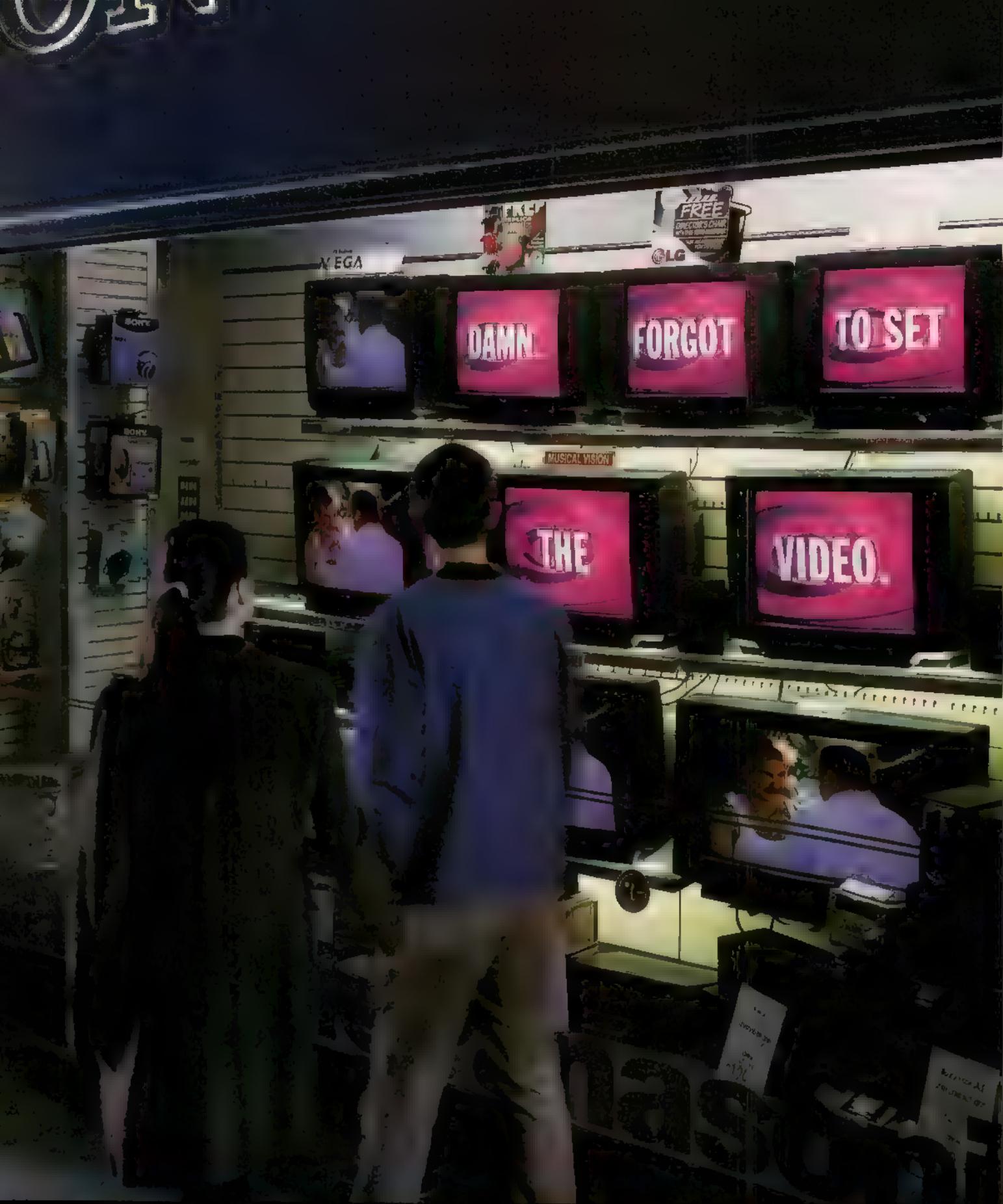
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Protecting your network

With 100 million people able to access to your computer via the Web, security isn't an option. But you can make your network a safer place with a firewall. **Steve Patient** shows you how

In general, the world is inhabited by reasonable people. But among the unreasonable minority there are computer-literate jerks, professionals, data thieves, unscrupulous competitors, opportunists, the easily tempted, and those who hear voices telling them their network is run by the devil.

You want to provide access to reasonable folk, while denying it to unreasonable folk. And all the firewall vendors will tell you the *ir* product does this. This might be the case, but only if the firewall is part of a comprehensive network access policy. This is vital—the access policy comes first and the tools to implement it come second. Without an access policy, you might as try to nail *ej* to the wall.

A firewall is a security mechanism that's set up between two networks, most commonly the Internet and a company LAN (local area network). But this isn't the only place you can implement them.

Firewalls should be set up between different parts of any wide area network and between areas and groups within a LAN to limit the exposure of valuable or sensitive data in the event of part of your network being compromised.

Firewalls are also an essential part of using a virtual private network. You should firewall all the areas where your access policy is vulnerable (see the Access Policy box on page 119).

A firewall works as a choke point – like an armoured and guarded gate that's the entrance to a med eva. castle. All data exchanged between the trusted and untrusted networks must pass through

the firewall—and the fewer gates you have, the easier it is to implement your access policy. But you can't have too many choke points, and even if it proves inconvenient, there must be no back doors for people to slip through.

Security's always a trade-off between flexibility and effectiveness. You could brick up your windows and doors to keep people out, but it wouldn't make your house a great place to live in, and you wouldn't be able to get out.

It's the same with firewalls. The only way to guarantee total security is to disconnect your networks. Holes in firewalls represent a risk, and the more protocols and user types you allow, the harder it is to maintain full control of your system.

Flexible firewalls

A single PC can bring down a network. Once connected to the Internet, it's open to attack from outside. Your best defence comes from being an unimportant member of a large crowd, but security through obscurity doesn't always offer the best protection.

There are firewall products for dial-up Net users, such as InterDesign's PC Secure Firewall and PC Secure's eponymous product. We'll start with PC Secure Firewall, because it neatly demonstrates the basics (see the walkthrough on page 118).

Internet data traffic is carried in packets by Transport Control Protocol (TCP) or Unacknowledged Data Protocol (UDP). These are used by both server and client software. Data packets are sent and received via logical ports.

You can find out all about trojans from Secured, the anti-trojan and encryption security resource site at www.titan.co.nz/ferita/page4.html

TOPICS & FEATURES		The Projects	
SUMMARY			
Trojan explained			
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There are dozens of trojans available to hackers, all of which are designed to compromise your network. Port blocking is the easiest way to defeat them

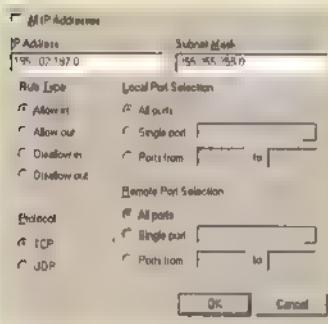
Setting up a firewall

Step 1



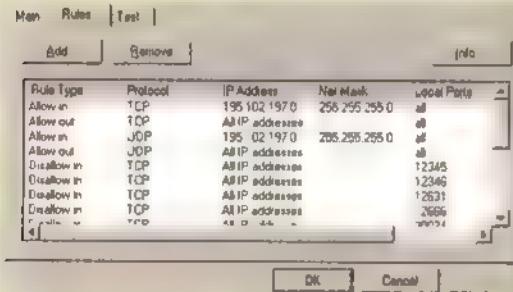
Choose your firewall software if you're connecting to an untrusted network. Several personal firewalls are also available

Step 2



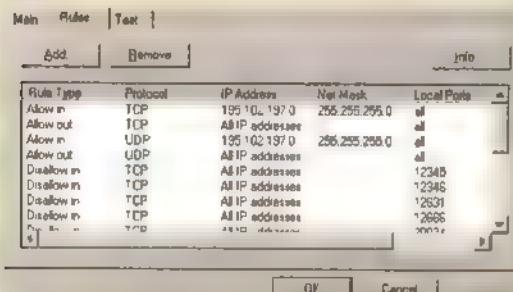
All firewalls are based on a set of rules – including personal ones – which need to be set. In the example above, we're only allowing packets addressed to the range of addresses handed out by the ISP

Step 3



This rule has been set for TCP and UDP. If the machine had a fixed IP address, it could be tightened further

Step 4



Get your firewall tested – preferably by a third party. This is as crucial as testing that you can restore from your backups. Don't test it against real hackers, or you might never know it failed. They won't write reports for you

To be valid, a packet must originate at the right IP address and be sent to another valid IP address using the right protocol on the right port.

Like all firewalls, PC Secure Firewall is rule-based. You can allow or prevent each supported type of data packet going each way. You can allow or prevent access to each port number, and you can control incoming and outgoing data packets to and from specific IP addresses. It doesn't matter how complex you think your firewall is, this is what happens at the heart of its system.

For a personal firewall, you only let data packets access your own IP address. You'd also block outgoing ports. These are commonly used by trojans, which set themselves up as servers on your machine for hackers to use.

These trojans can provide direct access to your machine, or collect information – such as keyboard activity – and send it to the hacker by email. You can check out details of 70 known trojans at www.titan.co.nz/ferita/page4.html and weep, because they are effective. Programs such as Back Orifice and NetBus can scan multiple sub-nets in seconds, picking up cached passwords and more before delivering the information back to the hacker. A few of them give the hacker more control over the network than you have – it won't even matter now if your ports are blocked.

Implementing a firewall

The way you implement a firewall will depend on your needs, technical resources, and the amount of money and time you have. Effectively, you're installing a static traffic routing service between the network service provider's router and your internal network.

If you have the necessary in-house expertise, you can configure a modern router to be an effective, if inflexible, firewall – Cisco (at www.cisco.com) sells

this as a benefit of its routers. But, depending on the complexity of the requirements, this method could take several months to set up, test and document. And then you'll have to consider the maintenance.

At the other end of the scale, you can buy a firewall in a box, with pre-installed proxy servers for all the services you want to control – including internal and external DNS – complete with a neat, easy to use and well-documented graphical interface. A good example is Watchguard's Firebox II (at www.watchguard.com). This implements authentication, encrypted VPNs and proxy servers, complete with remote management of multiple firewall units.

More than ever before, it makes sense to have a dedicated firewall machine. Server-based firewall software solutions only make sense for small businesses where the server doesn't work too hard, the risk of intrusion is small and the consequences of intrusion are trivial.

Political activities

In practice, you can't make a decision about how you'll implement a firewall until you have complete agreement from all interested parties on what it will and won't do. This is likely to involve political issues, rather than technical details.

For example, people might want access to RealAudio feeds, while your preferred policy is to block the ports it needs. You might want to prevent Java applets crossing the firewall because of known risks, while your staff will want everything on every Web page in the world to work. Education and demonstration are the answer.

Even though you're employed for your expertise, don't rely on your recommendations to save the day. You should employ intrusion experts and ask them to demonstrate and report your

Low maintenance, turnkey firewall solutions – also known as firewalls in a box – are becoming more popular, such as Firebox II from Watchguard (at www.watchguard.com)



At Hacked sites (www.cscl.ca/frames/f-hacked.htm), you can see a list of company and government Web sites that have been altered by hackers. This means they could read, write and delete files from supposedly secure servers

organisation's security weaknesses. Management is always impressed by a report it pays for.

Once you have a workable agreement, get prices for the different options and forward them to the people responsible for budget control. But don't be surprised if you find your £100,000 plan – for an all-powerful anti-terrorist firewall system – is scuppered in favour of denying company employees Neil access and employing a Web hosting company for the public Web server – it's a far cheaper option.

Coping with complaints from staff at all levels, while you're trying to implement an effective access policy, is a common experience when users and managers realise what functionality they lose as the price of achieving reliable security.

Effective risk analysis is the only weapon – if there's an intrusion, you can be sure that those who wanted a less secure network will blame you for doing what they asked.

Firewall types

Technically, there are two types of firewall – network level and application level. These have become blurred in some products. In essence, a router is a network-level firewall product.

Network-level firewalls are fast and stupid. They make their decisions based on the source, destination address and the port used by each IP packet. Whether your network level box is called a router or a firewall, it'll route packets through it. To do this, your network needs a valid block of IP addresses.

The main advantage of network-level firewalls is their speed and transparency. Your users won't know it's there.

The more sophisticated examples maintain a lot of information about connections and the data they're routing,

but not as much information as an application-level firewall.

Application-level firewalls are effectively a computer running proxy services. These are more flexible. For instance, they can handle IP address translation so you don't need an Internet IP address block internally. They can also carry out and act on sophisticated audit and logging features, raise alarms based on packet content and patterns of use, and many other tricks.

On the downside, application-level firewalls are software. This means they're slower – especially if they're short on RAM – and they might not be transparent to your users, although the latest products can be made transparent. Interestingly, application-level firewalls sometimes end themselves to a more conservative security approach, in part because they're finer grained and service-oriented.

Application-level firewalls depend on proxy services, and you need a proxy for each service. But you can buy proxy packages – one of which is the TIS Internet Firewall Toolkit, which includes proxies for Telnet, Rlogin, FTP, X-Window, http and NNTP, Usenet news. If you want to add another service, you'll need a new proxy server for it.

If you run a Linux-based server, you get to use free firewall software, including pf, ipfw, and ipfwadm. If you know what you're doing, you can build a complete application-level firewall solution under Linux for the cost of the hardware. Check out <http://newlix.com> for a pre-configured example.

DMZ

For companies requiring publicly accessible services as a Web server, the best approach is a demilitarised zone (DMZ). This is the name given to a network protected by your firewall. >

What a firewall can do

- 1 Prevent any access to your network, while providing access from your network to the other network
- 2 Prevent unauthorised logins to your network
- 3 Log attempts by unauthorised people to access your network
- 4 Provide audit trails showing who accessed what and when
- 5 Let you physically implement part of the company's access policy
- 6 Act as a security blanket to reassure anxious, but non-technical, management
- 7 Let you provide public access to a company Web site, offering things like downloadable files without compromising your access policy
- 8 Implement privilege rings, so you can secure parts of an internal network against access from other parts of the same network
- 9 Handle network address translation between your network and the Internet
- 10 Secure a virtual private network with authentication and encryption

Access policy

At the furthest extreme, the data on a computer can be so secret that you don't need a firewall at all – the machine should never be connected to a network, let alone the Internet.

The highest data security classifications in the UK require data to be stored in encrypted form on disk, in a safe when it isn't in use, with all traces wiped from the computer between accesses. The room contains the computer and the safe, and the safe can't be opened while the room is unsecured. As well as being secured while the data is in use, it's enclosed in a Faraday cage and has an isolated power supply.

Too many managers spend small fortunes on firewall-based network security, yet they let strangers wander through their offices. They don't lock their servers in secure machine

The CERT Co-ordination Centre (www.cert.org) provides you with advice to improve the security of your network

rooms or use unguessable passwords. They don't change passwords regularly or impose internal security access levels. They don't disable accounts when people leave. They don't disable floppy disk drives or use password access to printers or network fax machines. The list goes on, but we won't.

In many ways, a firewall is the least important part of your data security policy. The one undeniable benefit you gain – and the main reason for implementing a firewall – is network security. Security in the sense that outsiders can't compromise the integrity or operation of one of your most important business tools – your computer network. That's why ISPs were among the first to take firewalls seriously.



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What a firewall can't do

- 1 Provide you with a workable and implementable access policy or security plan
- 2 Prevent viruses entering the network (although some claim to do this, it's a poor way to implement virus protection)
- 3 Stop your staff faxing data, taking it out on disk, in their heads, or on paper
- 4 Prevent casual or vindictive visitors from seeing workstation screens and other sensitive material
- 5 Secure data against your server being burned, stolen or damaged
- 6 Stop your own people compromising security by revealing passwords to each other and people outside your organisation
- 7 Prevent remote access via a modem by someone who has either left a machine connected and unattended or divulged a dial-in password
- 8 Prevent network access via an unsecure back door, such as a desktop modem set up by staff
- 9 Prevent some types of denial of service attack
- 10 Protect you from unknown security holes in the software

but maintained separately from your internal network and the Internet.

Imagine a company with an ethernet-based network and a firewall machine. Data comes in on one side of the firewall and out the other side via an ethernet card. Put another ethernet card in and attach it to the computer you're using for public Web access. Now you can configure it so that no one from outside (from the Internet, that is) has access to your internal company network – only to the public system on the secondary network.

By ensuring that there are never any trust relationships between the two networks – your internal network and the one that hosts the public Web server – you know that even if someone gains control of the publicly accessible machine, it won't compromise your internal network.

The recent hack on the White House site occurred because the hackers were



Newlix Omega software - Communications - Internet/LAN Card version 1.1

Be in configuration
TCP/IP overview

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Gateway IP: 207.96.130.1

DNS or Name Server(s):

Reboot after changes have been made

Web configurator password:

Save changes

Help on [About](#) [Index](#)

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Many firewalls have Web interfaces. Check one out at Newlix's site (at <http://newlix.com>), but you won't be able to change the settings without a password.

able to gain access to another computer that had a trust relationship with the White House Web server. If that server had been put in a DMZ, the White House might have avoided a great deal of embarrassment.

Who's paranoid?

If you adopt the DMZ model, you'll find yourself in the comfortable position of being able to make your public servers harder to attack, even though they're more accessible. For instance, if the public machine only runs a Web server, you don't need NetBIOS or SMB access, so you can block ports 139 and 135.

You can block everything on your network except HTTP. This is especially easy on firewalls with Web-based control interfaces. This doesn't leave hackers with much in the way of attack options, except denial of service.

With your Web server in a DMZ, you don't have to worry about allowing CGI access, Java security holes or scripts. You can afford to be flexible, since a security breach won't immediately threaten your internal network.

Perhaps the biggest security issue is when the public Web server delivers dynamic pages based on information in a company database. There's a tendency for databases to come with Web servers now, but it's an insecure option. Think like a hacker – using it means poking a hole in the firewall.

Your public Web server should contact your database using a limited protocol a hacker can't extend. Your Web server might need port numbers, but it doesn't need to know what your company paid for the parts. It might need total sales of an item, but not who bought each one.

In practice, issues such as how, when and what company information can be made available to the public via your Web server are mandated by law, as well as good commercial sense.

Your company's access policy should determine this and limit what's required. Security requires your firewall to default to a failsafe situation. This means you should set things up so that anything that isn't permitted in the rules of your firewall is denied access.

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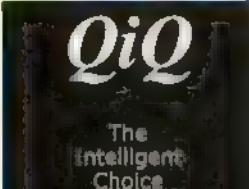
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The *Internet Magazine* ISP Lab tests put UK's top service providers through a rigorous set of performance tests. Find out how your provider scored in our exclusive tests. Turn to page 140 to find out which ISP wins our award for most consistent performance over the last six months

The winner

ENTANET is back in the top spot, exactly where it was two months ago, thanks to 100 per cent availability and strong Web speed results. Last month's winner, Interactive Web, has moved down 38 places to 39th. JUNet (Pipex Dial) has risen to fourth, up from 26th. And Demon, missing from last month's table thanks to an out of date dial-up number, bounces back into the charts at number six.

Good news too for FreeDotNet, the highest placed free service at 17th, up from 62nd place. Virgin Net is the only other free service in the top half of the table, scraping in at 49th position, a big improvement on 81st place last month. The other free services are in the bottom half of the table. Looks like the Net is conforming to one of life's general rules - you get what you pay for.

On the move

Intensive Networks is this month's biggest riser, up 74 places from 95th to 21st. DIALNet Connect rises 61 places to 37th, and Moonlight Internet Services is up 51 places to

38th. BT Internet has done well, jumping 35 places to 45th. Which? On-line also deserves a special mention, gaining 22 places to hit 47th. Improvements to its network have led to a steady improvement in its ranking.

New entries this month include Viper-Net and Swift Internet - sticking close together at 26th and 25th

Not such good news for Connect FREE, dropping 56 places to 79th. ClaraNet has also suffered, losing 37 places to finish 67th. Global Internet and Compuserve have both dropped 32 places, ending up 46th and 48th.

Hanging on the telephone

This month we've made some improvement to the way our tests deal with hangs.

A hang is when your Internet connection appears to go to sleep and nothing much happens on



ISP OF THE
MONTH

ENTANET

screen. You might be part way through a download when everything stops. After a while it restarts as if nothing happened. Hangs are usually caused by congestion on the ISP's backbone, and sometimes by general Internet congestion or problems at the server end.

They're frustrating to experience, and our test results reflect their importance. When a connection hangs during a test, the seconds tick by and the download time goes up. The ISP finishes up with a long download time in its data. This affects its final average bringing its eventual rank down.

When we look at the data in detail, we find that the top 20 or so ISPs suffer virtually no hangs. In the middle section of the rankings, there's a handful of hung connections, and at the bottom of the table the ISPs suffer hangs on about five per cent of downloads.

Since all the ISPs are tested on the same sites, and some of the ISPs consistently come through these tests without a single hang, when an ISP does pick up a lot of hangs, we've every reason to believe it's their own responsibility and they deserve a lower ranking.

But results in the lower part of the table can be unfairly dominated by the number of hangs - masking good availability scores and regular download speeds. So what we've done this month is stop any hung

Uppers & downers

▲ INTENSIVE NETWORKS

The biggest rise of the month - from 95th place to 21st, thanks to improvements in US site download times.

▲ DIALNET CONNECT

Up from 98th position to 37th. The second biggest jump this month. All down to much improved US throughput figures.

▼ CONNECT FREE

Down 56 places from 23rd to 79th. Decent download times but let down by its availability figure.

▼ CIX

A big fall of 54 places from 2nd position to 56th - due to lower throughput in all regions.

connection once it's clocked up 100 seconds of inactivity, and move on to the next test. We feel this mirrors the real world, since most people won't wait forever for a hung connection to sort itself out. They'll either try a page reload or move on to a different site.

Under our new system, hangs still count against an ISP, but they count a little less. It's unlikely to affect the top ISPs, but at the bottom it should make the results more representative of an ISP's regular download speeds and availability figures, rather than a simple reflection of who gets the longest hangs.

The only ISP tests that count

The *Internet Magazine* ISP tests are based on proven scientific testing principles. We make sure we connect to each ISP many times - which means we make thousands of calls.

The results produced by this extensive testing are then processed, resulting in the test analysis and ranking figures you see in these pages. At every stage, the results are checked to make sure they are accurate.

Please remember that these tests are only designed to examine the availability and speed of an ISP - we don't test their prices or technical support. For the lowdown on the complete set of services provided by the top 30 ISPs, get hold of our gigantic ISP of the Year feature from our Faxback service on page 123.



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tests



This month's best-performing ISPs, as tested in *Internet Magazine's* labs

Rank	ISP	Phone	Up	Down	Latency	Loss	Score
1	N-ANE	(01895) 618 266	98.96	11.86	11.77	12.60	9.65
2	Onyx	(0145) 715 715	98.96	11.86	11.77	12.60	8.66
3	stone	(0181) 941 9195	100.00	11.05	8.0	12.83	9.69
4	ULNet-Pipex Dia	(0500) 567 000	97.95	12.02	10.81	13.54	1.67
5	Direct Connection	(0800) 372 0000	99.02	12.18	10.84	14.10	8.63
6	Demon	(0181) 371 234	78.95	132.27	2.39	12.65	0.15
7	sterne UK	(0845) 070 0006	100.00	12.44	12.50	12.05	9.53
8	Pinnacle Internet	(01903) 526 099	98.96	12.34	10.72	14.42	11.70
9	REDNET	(01994) 513 333	76.96	12.22	12.19	12.00	8.97
10	Soi Ping NET	(0183) 788 0656	78.95	12.50	6.0	14.20	9.44
11	Community Internet	(0805) 858 000	97.95	12.42	12.14	13.27	9.85
12	oweb	(0845) 606 2014	0.00	12.75	12.40	13.80	9.53
13	internetCentral	(01220) 611 000	100.00	12.86	12.91	13.18	10.95
14	internet4u Business	(01224) 333 370	100.00	12.01	12.61	13.96	9.41
15	NetLinc Internet	(0800) 731 3311	0.00	12.93	12.3	13.85	0.47
16	Pipex	(01908) 643 592	98.96	12.80	12.67	13.51	7.99
17	FreeDo Net	(0181) 938 3338	98.05	12.71	1.18	15.19	9.49
18	Ace Internet	(0705) 066 7423	0.00	13.2	12.31	14.30	3.05
19	Uptime Internet Services	(0800) 783 7409	0.00	13.33	2.03	13.37	8.56
20	NewNet	(01800) 639 638	0.00	13.22	12.67	14.60	3.00
21	Intense Networks	(01672) 511 054	0.00	13.22	12.67	14.60	9.60
22	Cheapnet	(0800) 688 160	9.02	13.32	2.89	14.19	9.56
23	J-Net	(01925) 684 444	98.96	13.14	12.68	14.64	9.35
24	frontline Internet Services	(0173) 530 0090	98.95	13.18	12.06	15.02	10.69
25	Swift-ite 30	(0845) 606 0215	0.00	13.35	12.89	14.43	10.74
26	v-pan-Net		0.00	13.35	12.89	14.43	6.74
27	Mid-Net Interne	(0800) 328 2253	97.93	13.08	12.29	14.72	1.67
28	DNA Internet Services	(01804) 629717	99.01	13.25	2.81	14.30	0.67
29	ignet Internet Services	(0181) 880 4650	100.00	13.42	12.97	14.21	2.13
30	K2LINE	(0845) 223 4567	0.00	13.45	12.79	14.85	10.43
31	Easynet	(0171) 68 4444	99.01	13.34	12.89	14.41	0.70
32	Netkonect	(0171) 345 7777	89.7	12.11	11.17	13.23	1.29
33	Piggyback Internet	(01271) 602 072	0.00	13.57	12.67	15.01	1.77
34	Mobile & Wireless Internet	(0800) 092 3013	95.28	13.05	11.24	13.47	9.82
35	Nordi am	(0800) 436 2093	78.05	13.46	12.68	15.26	1.20
36	Proplyweb	(0600) 636 341	0.00	13.74	1.58	17.00	10.40
37	DACNet Compu	(0800) 88 88	100.00	13.75	1.56	17.02	0.56
38	Moonlight Internet Services	(01226) 836 8688	97.1	13.36	12.89	14.44	10.74
39	Interact ve Web	(01926) 450 099	93.51	12.89	11.96	14.77	9.05
40	SAQ Internet	(0870) 737 700	98.96	13.68	12.72	15.49	1.36
41	erbe-net	(0171) 360 8000	99.02	13.70	11.68	16.98	9.37
42	Interne Alliance eXchange	(0800) 052 0523	96.00	13.29	2.45	15.33	9.88
43	Paradise Internet	(01251) 424 853	100.00	13.95	13.16	15.20	13.39
44	Sun	(0181) 901 2777	100.00	13.95	13.16	15.00	3.39
45	BT One Net	(0800) 800 001	95.9	13.43	2.98	14.26	1.98
46	Global Internet	(0870) 909 804	98.95	13.86	2.72	15.98	10.09
47	Which? Online	(0645) 830 240	99.01	13.90	12.4	16.34	10.59
48	CompuServe	(0600) 000 200	100.00	14.06	2.59	16.90	8.7
49	virgin Net	(0600) 558 800	98.05	13.79	2.54	16.06	9.92
50	London Web Communications	(0800) 026 8306	95.28	13.40	12.59	15.76	1.51

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This month's best-performing ISPs, as tested in *Internet Magazine's* labs

Rank	Provider	Phone number	Overall speed	UK speed	UK download	UK upload	EU speed	EU download	EU upload
1	Total connectivity Providers	017031571300	100.00	14	13.5	15.15	26	25.35	18.84
2	Technocom	01753744000	90.00	14.15	12.54	15.35	21.92	20.43	19.92
3	Legend Internet	01274741500	98.96	14.92	12.52	16.43	24.34	23.26	24.34
4	Datanet	01252180081	100.00	14.18	12.42	14.20	23.53	22.55	23.53
5	Pipemedia Online	012451828218	100.00	14.22	12.73	16.5	24.34	23.26	24.34
6	U-X	018255551	98.95	14.08	13.64	16.26	20.81	19.40	18.76
7	Sonnet Internet	01718912000	88.07	12.54	7.07	13.40	16.27	9.34	11.05
8	Gemsoft	017422752070	99.01	14.12	13.29	16.7	20.05	19.75	19.03
9	data internet services	01942522333	97.95	14.00	11.05	15.88	20.84	19.54	19.62
10	Netapha	017031463200	99.01	14.32	13.59	16.44	20.87	19.37	19.95
11	Voxnet	0175737800	95.95	13.92	14.13	16.19	21.14	19.88	19.62
12	Freedom To Surf	01818812111	100.00	14.06	14.65	15.44	20.87	19.54	19.87
13	AC Entanet	01279300677	14.39	13.85	13.39	16.19	21.14	19.88	19.95
14	CYBERphoeNิก.net	015431454840	97.93	14.38	12.90	16.19	21.14	19.88	19.95
15	Aviators Network	0170012842867	94.44	13.89	12.78	15.65	20.85	19.71	19.38
16	WorldWide Web Services	01784808800	98.05	14.43	12.36	16.71	21.32	19.88	19.32
17	ClaraNet	08001582828	94.44	13.96	13.35	16.34	20.25	19.54	19.62
18	Telinc Internet Services	08005420800	93.51	13.81	13.03	15.89	20.87	19.54	19.87
19	Cable & Wireless UK	0800070523001	94.39	14.12	12.84	16.62	21.14	19.88	19.95
20	Power Internet	019081605188	98.95	14.82	13.96	16.70	21.93	19.54	19.62
21	Free-Online	08707060504	81.47	12.59	11.76	14.17	19.68	18.71	18.81
22	Ecuse Networking	01392702345	88.78	13.40	12.87	14.61	19.73	18.81	18.73
23	Newbury Internet	01635569123	80.00	15.12	4.5	17.34	21.14	19.88	19.95
24	H-Way	016351573300	100.00	15.36	11.02	19.25	20.85	19.54	19.62
25	The Internet Business	01232424190	99.01	15.31	13.85	17.05	21.41	19.88	19.32
26	CableNet	09420183000	100.00	15.53	12.77	19.81	21.41	19.88	19.32
27	BT LineOne	09063020100	95.04	14.80	13.17	17.49	21.80	19.54	19.62
28	F-ANET	08000604070	90.56	16.36	12.75	16.7	20.85	19.54	19.62
29	Connect FREE	08707421111	87.27	13.65	12.36	15.30	21.26	19.88	19.32
30	UK2Net	01715380253	91.81	14.52	16.02	15.47	21.52	19.88	19.32
31	Direct Net Access	012321201555	98.95	15.88	14.74	17.92	21.52	19.88	19.32
32	Freeserve	00905300400	94.11	15.3	14.20	14.17	19.69	18.63	18.71
33	Raynet	01272256401	98.00	16.10	4.78	18.5	21.77	19.88	19.32
34	PCs & Online	0890223300	98.76	16.06	12.57	19.32	21.85	19.88	19.32
35	anet Internet	0800500300	92.23	14.97	16.05	19.71	21.85	19.88	19.32
36	Enterprise	016261677666	100.00	16.30	14.48	19.19	21.96	19.88	19.32
37	Portland Communications	01819421115	95.04	15.51	4.52	17.89	21.27	19.88	19.32
38	Netcom Internet	08009800107	99.01	16.27	14.94	18.59	21.64	19.88	19.32
39	Ex Web	0800525470	82.75	13.62	11.80	14.22	19.56	18.71	18.71
40	Mitsubishi Electric Online Services	0800226600	95.04	15.86	7.2	15.80	21.6	19.88	19.32
41	CM Net serv	0800614581	97.95	16.48	15.37	19.00	21.55	19.88	19.32
42	Wave Rider Internet	01216033888	82.66	14.11	3.25	15.68	21.38	19.88	19.32
43	Gifford Internet Services	01179397222	96.00	16.46	12.57	22.2	21.01	19.88	19.32
44	Forge 9	08000737800	76.00	13.31	12.69	14.87	19.42	19.88	19.32
45	Discovery	01201364410	9.34	16.12	14.48	19.15	21.26	19.88	19.32
46	Zoo Internet	0181917000	97.11	17.38	17.25	17.84	21.90	19.88	19.32
47	WSS Internet Access	017941420264	100.00	18.55	17.89	19.40	21.34	19.88	19.32
48	Way Soho	01217145734	98.93	18.53	6.80	21.38	19.60	19.88	19.32
49	Abel Internet	01714655555	91.34	17.12	7.20	24.30	19.68	19.88	19.32
50	BT Click	0800017377887	87.93	17.21	16.06	19.97	21.16	19.88	19.32
51	Computalynx	016061231437	71.63	16.39	13.52	16.23	21.37	19.88	19.32

How the performance tests work

The Internet Magazine provider lab tests are designed to give you all the information you need on the speed and availability of Internet Service Providers. Every month, our testing system accesses each of the ISPs on the list many times. Our system repeatedly checks

- The availability of the ISP. How easy is it to make the connection? How often are all the ISP's modems engaged? If the telecommunications company handling the ISP's incoming calls gets too busy, this reduces the ISP's availability figure in just the same way as engaged modems
- The speed of the connection. How long do a number of popular web pages take to download?

We're now testing access speeds to popular Web pages in the UK, JS and Europe. The overall average web speed printed in the table is a weighted average, since most of us are more interested in fast loading for UK and JS sites, and less bothered about loading foreign language pages from our cousins in the rest of Europe. If Europe is of special interest to you, ignore the overall average and concentrate on the last column.

To rank the ISPs, we calculate the geometric mean of the availability and average web performance. A geometric mean gives equal weight to these two figures.

- This month's tests ran over the period 4-21 June 1999.



How the ISPs performed over the past six months

Find out how your service provider has done in our unique chart...

Provider	Phone	Phone	Phone	
1 REDNET	(01494) 513 333	www.rednet.co.uk	(0500) 500 100	www.tidie.co.uk
2 CiX	(0181) 255 5151	www.cix.co.uk	(01424) 830 900	www.cubienet.net
3 Uninet Internet Services	(0800) 783 7499	www.uninet.co.uk	(01276) 856 868	www.moonlight-internet.co.uk
4 CompuServe	(0990) 000 200	www.compuserve.co.uk	(01942) 522 333	www.idcernet.co.uk
5 Mitsubishi Electric Internet Services	(0800) 328 7253	www.mitsubishi-internet.co.uk	(01753) 737 800	www.vosinet.co.uk
6 Pionair Internet	(01903) 524 999	www.pionair.co.uk	(0171) 345 7777	www.netkonec.co.uk
7 iWeb	(0845) 606 2014	www.iweb.net.uk	(01703) 363 200	www.interaphase.net
8 J-Net	(01925) 484 444	www.j-net.net	(01908) 605 88	www.piwirrane.co.uk
9 Net-AM	(0800) 496 2903	www.net-am.net	(01635) 573 300	www.hway.co.uk
10 Global Internet	(0870) 909 8041	www.global-internet.co.uk	(0181) 880 4650	www.cygnet.co.uk
11 Direct Connection	(0800) 072 0000	www.drc.net	(0500) 636 343	www.proweb.co.uk
12 Net Direct Internet	(0800) 731 3311	www.netdirect-internet.co.uk	(0131) 445 5555	www.abel.net.uk
13 Primex	(01908) 643 597	www.primex.co.uk	(0906) 302 0100	www.netdirect.net
14 Mitsubishi Electric Internet Services	(0800) 226 600	www.mitsubishi-internet.co.uk	(0990) 500 049	www.eeserve.net
15 Total Connectivity Providers	(01703) 571 300	www.tcp.co.uk	(01604) 231 437	www.computalynx.co.uk
16 Freedom To Surf	(0181) 881 2111	www.freedomtosing.net	0800 731 2887	www.bticlick.com
17 Pavo Internet	(0173) 607 072	www.pavo-internet.co.uk	(0800) 092 3013	www.cwcom.net
18 FreeDotNet	(0181) 938 3338	www.thedotnet.co.uk	(01604) 670 717	www.dna.com
19 Sonne Internet	(0171) 891 2000	www.sonnet.co.uk	(01793) 420 764	www.wsxsoft.co.uk
20 Onyx	(0345) 715 715	www.onyxnet.co.uk	(01624) 677 666	www.enterprise.net
21 UniNet (Pex Dial)	(0500) 567 000	www.uni.net	(01252) 810 081	www.data.net.uk
22 Channel	(0800) 358 2828	www.channel.net	(01784) 898 800	www.webs.co.uk
23 Forte Internet Services	(0171) 536 9090	www.forte.co.uk	(0171) 360 8000	www.cerbenet.net
24 Jondo Web Communications	(0800) 026 8306	www.jondoweb.net	(0800) 614 581	www.hfiserv.net
25 Community Internet	(01865) 856 000	www.community-internet.co.uk	(0800) 092 3001	www.cwcom.net
26 n.e.net for Business	(01224) 333 370	www.n-e.net	(0800) 092 6070	www.channel.com
27 Technopon	(01753) 714 200	www.technopon.net	(0171) 734 5734	www.iway.co.uk
28 Gifford Internet Services	(0117) 939 7722	www.gifford.co.uk	(01672) 511 054	www.intensity.net
29 Presto Online	(0990) 223 300	www.presto.net	(01635) 569 123	www.newbury.net
30 CYBERplus Internet	(01543) 454 840	www.cyberplus.co.uk	(0170) 742 1111	www.connectfree.net
31 Port and Communications	(0181) 942 1115	www.portcom.co.uk	(0800) 881 881	www.ia.net.co.uk
32 Netcom Central	(01270) 611 000	www.netcom.co.uk	(0870) 706 0504	www.freeline.net
33 UKONE NE	(0845) 333 4567	www.ukone.net	(0800) 052 0523	www.133.net
34 Netcom	(0181) 941 9195	www.netcom.co.uk	0392 202 345	www.expose.co.uk
35 SAQ Internet	(0870) 737 7700	www.saq-internet.co.uk	(0181) 961 7000	www.zoo.co.uk
36 Gomsol	(0114) 275 7070	www.gomsol.co.uk	(0800) 542 0800	www.lmico.co.uk
37 Interactive Web	(01926) 450 099	www.interactive-web.co.uk	(01232) 424 190	www.lbus.net
38 Netcom.net	(0800) 980 9107	www.netcom.net	(0171) 538 0253	www.uk2net.com
39 NewNet	(07000) 639 638	www.newnet.co.uk	(0800) 525 470	www.enetweb.co.uk
40 Legend Internet	(01276) 743 500	www.legend.co.uk	(0500) 558 800	www.virgin.net
41 SoftProg.NET	(0181) 788 0656	www.softprog.net	(01222) 256 601	www.baynet.co.uk
42 Avantus Network	(0700) 284 2867	www.avantus.net	(0645) 830 240	www.which.net
43 BT Internet	(0800) 800 001	www.btinternet.com	(0181) 903 2777	www.surflink.co.uk

Top performers in the past six months

As well as our normal tests, every month we produce a table showing how the ISPs have performed over the last six months. This is created by averaging the monthly results for availability and Web access speed. The table only includes ISPs that have figured in our monthly tables in every one of the past six months. Some providers aren't included because we only began testing them recently. Others haven't made it because there were problems testing them in at least one of these months. Exclusion from this table simply means that for some reason an ISP wasn't tested for six consecutive months – it's no reflection on the quality of the ISP's service.

The results

This month, 86 providers have qualified for our six-month tests. The top five positions are quite similar

to last month, with REDNET once again taking the top spot. The highest placed free provider is FreeDotNet, with a creditable 18th position. FreeDotNet also did well in the regular tests this month, coming 17th.

The fastest climber is U-Net, rising from 26th to eighth place. U-Net has been doing consistently well in the monthly tests and it's consistency that counts when the six month averages are calculated.

Netcom is the second biggest mover, moving up eight places through the middle of the table to take 38th position. Legend Internet, H-Way and Community Internet also saw modest improvements in their rankings this month.

The highest new entry in the charts is Mitsubishi Electric Internet Services, at 14th place. It's been a bad month for Cable Internet,

dropping 14 places to 44th. Gifford Internet Services has also suffered, falling 12 places to 28th.

At the bottom of the table SurfLink is still propelling up the order. To be fair to the company, it's only in bottom place because of its poor performance figures back in the spring (44th this month – not brilliant, but in the top half of the table). In future months, as the spring results fall out of the six month averages, there should be a significant improvement in its six-month ranking. Which? On-Line is in a similar position. Recent improvements in its monthly statistics haven't yet been able to wipe out some poor performances in the past. It's due to rise off the bottom of the table quite soon.

If you're looking for consistency from your service provider, these are the results to watch.

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This month's best performing hosting companies

Rank	Company	Website	Throughput	Availability	Rank	Company	Website	Throughput	Availability	Rank	Company	Website	Throughput	Availability
1	VBCnet	www.vbc.net	4.04	99.90	1	Atlas.net	www.atlas.net	4.04	99.90	1	Zoo.co.uk	www.zoo.co.uk	4.04	99.90
2	Virtua Internet	www.vi.net	421.87	99.74	2	Data.net International	www.datanet.co.uk	60.35	99.90	2	Atlas.net	www.atlas.net	60.35	99.70
3	EasyNet	www.easynet.co.uk	390.35	99.90	3	Charis Internet Services	www.charis.net	364.45	100.00	3	Charis Internet Services	www.charis.net	59.84	99.4
4	Paradise Internet Network Services	www.paradise.co.uk	360.45	99.42	4	Tech Ltd	www.tech-ltd.co.uk	342.97	99.63	4	Tech Ltd	www.tech-ltd.co.uk	50.41	99.86
5	Frontier Internet Services	www.frontier.net	360.45	99.42	5	Cygnus Internet Solutions	www.cygnus.co.uk	300.89	99.77	5	Cygnus Internet Solutions	www.cygnus.co.uk	54.2	99.00
6	Demon Internet	www.demon.net	342.97	99.63	6	Preston Online	www.prestononline.co.uk	300.89	99.77	6	Preston Online	www.prestononline.co.uk	51.16	99.07
7	Horizon	www.horizon.net	300.89	99.77	7	Cerbernet Ltd	www.cerbernet.net	300.18	99.86	7	Cerbernet Ltd	www.cerbernet.net	55.7	99.33
8	Net Direct	www.netdirect.co.uk	300.18	99.86	8	PS Net UK Ltd	www.psnetuk.co.uk	274.34	99.74	8	PS Net UK Ltd	www.psnetuk.co.uk	52.5	99.58
9	Frontier Internet Services	www.frontier.net	274.34	99.74	9	Way Limited	www.way.co.uk	245.16	98.39	9	Way Limited	www.way.co.uk	52.42	99.24
10	NFT	www.nft.net	245.16	98.39	10	Onyx Internet	www.onyx.co.uk	237.21	99.81	10	Onyx Internet	www.onyx.co.uk	51.24	99.05
11	Net UK	www.netuk.co.uk	237.21	99.81	11	Corpex	www.corpex.co.uk	231.26	99.00	11	Corpex	www.corpex.co.uk	49.87	99.8
12	Magic Moments	www.magicmoments.com	231.26	99.00	12	MyraTech	www.myrotech.co.uk	217.69	99.8	12	MyraTech	www.myrotech.co.uk	49.0	99.16
13	Frontier	www.frontier.co.uk	217.69	99.8	13	Internet Central	www.intcentral.co.uk	215.21	94.7	13	Internet Central	www.intcentral.co.uk	49.49	99.79
14	WebWorlds	www.webworlds.co.uk	215.21	94.7	14	REDNET	www.rednet.co.uk	202.08	99.91	14	REDNET	www.rednet.co.uk	49.55	99.72
15	NetBenefit	www.netbenefit.co.uk	202.08	99.91	15	Scotland Online	www.scotland.net	177.83	100.00	15	Scotland Online	www.scotland.net	48.25	99.23
16	Direct Connection	www.dcon.net	177.83	100.00	16	Soft Options UK	www.softoptions.co.uk	176.87	99.77	16	Soft Options UK	www.softoptions.co.uk	45.4	99.49
17	Technocom PLC	www.technocom.co.uk	176.87	99.77	17	ME-NET	www.menet.net	174.37	95.10	17	ME-NET	www.menet.net	44.47	99.33
18	K-web Internet	www.k-web.co.uk	174.37	95.10	18	The Web Factory	www.webfactory.co.uk	158.82	99.05	18	The Web Factory	www.webfactory.co.uk	38.10	96.65
19	IntWeb	www.intweb.co.uk	158.82	99.05	19	Metone	www.metone.co.uk	142.21	94.63	19	Metone	www.metone.co.uk	16.4	98.52
20	NFT UK	www.nft.co.uk	142.21	94.63	20	ENI-ANET	www.eni-anet.co.uk	134.22	94.78	20	ENI-ANET	www.eni-anet.co.uk	15.68	95.56
21	SaraNet Ltd	www.saranet.co.uk	134.22	94.78	21	Plug'n	www.plugn.co.uk	130.26	98.84	21	Plug'n	www.plugn.co.uk	13.0	94.48
22	Internet Network Services	www.internet-networks.com	130.26	98.84	22	AC-Online	www.ac-online.co.uk	122.22	99.74	22	AC-Online	www.ac-online.co.uk	10.34	99.40
23	BT WebWorld	www.btwebworld.co.uk	122.22	99.74	23	Reeds Web Hosting	www.reedsweb.co.uk	109.79	97.95	23	Reeds Web Hosting	www.reedsweb.co.uk	29.37	98.86
24	Worldwide Web Services	www.webs.co.uk	109.79	97.95	24	Legend Internet	www.legend.co.uk	98.65	99.44	24	Legend Internet	www.legend.co.uk	27.93	99.79
25	Sonnet Internet Ltd	www.sonnet.co.uk	98.65	99.44	25	JKIP	www.jkip.co.uk	96.32	99.93	25	JKIP	www.jkip.co.uk	28.81	99.95
26	Total Web Solutions	www.totaweb.co.uk	96.32	99.93	26	Quza	www.quza.com	93.80	96.46	26	Quza	www.quza.com	35.82	99.60
27	Netcentric Solutions Ltd	www.netcentric.co.uk	93.80	96.46	27	Netcetera	www.netcetera.co.uk	93.59	99.81	27	Netcetera	www.netcetera.co.uk	35.63	99.56
28	Telnet	www.telnet.co.uk	93.59	99.81	28	JDS Technology Ltd	www.jds.co.uk	90.08	99.30	28	JDS Technology Ltd	www.jds.co.uk	34.11	97.65
29	Oxford Community Internet	www.oxfordcommunity.co.uk	90.08	99.30	29	ServerWorld	www.serverworld.net	86.05	99.88	29	ServerWorld	www.serverworld.net	39.71	99.84
30	Cocoon Internet Services	www.cocoon.co.uk	86.05	99.88	30	Calligrafix	www.ca.ligrafix.co.uk	83.91	99.74	30	Calligrafix	www.ca.ligrafix.co.uk	39.26	99.91
31	Pavilion Internet	www.pavilion.co.uk	83.91	99.74	31	Multimedia Machine Ltd	www.mmm.co.uk	80.29	99.15	31	Multimedia Machine Ltd	www.mmm.co.uk	37.69	99.86
32	Net	www.netuk.co.uk	80.29	99.15	32	1st Solution Internet	www.1st-solution.net	79.31	99.59	32	1st Solution Internet	www.1st-solution.net	37.67	98.16
33	NetLink Internet Services	www.netlink.co.uk	79.31	99.59	33	Abel Internet	www.abel.net.co.uk	77.45	97.09	33	Abel Internet	www.abel.net.co.uk	37.04	98.70
34	FB	www.fb.net	78.38	100.00	34	WinNet	www.winnet.net	77.45	97.09	34	WinNet	www.winnet.net	33.87	99.58
35	London Web	www.londonweb.co.uk	77.45	97.09	35	Stratus Net	www.stratus.net	76.78	99.95	35	Stratus Net	www.stratus.net	33.24	99.63
36	Research Machines	www.rmpc.co.uk	76.78	99.95	36	Da-Link	www.da-link.net	76.70	98.79	36	Da-Link	www.da-link.net	31.99	99.63
37	NetCentric	www.netcentric.co.uk	76.70	98.79	37	Thames Global Internet Services	www.tgis.co.uk	66.39	99.81	37	Thames Global Internet Services	www.tgis.co.uk	31.52	99.65
38	NetV	www.netv.co.uk	66.39	99.81	38	Andover Online	www.andover.co.uk	64.45	99.03	38	Andover Online	www.andover.co.uk	31.34	92.16
39	Ace-Internet	www.ace-internet.co.uk	64.45	99.03	39	Global Gold Network Ltd	www.globagoold.co.uk	62.93	99.88	39	Adept	www.addept.co.uk	31.29	97.39
40	East Midlands Network (EMNET)	www.emnet.co.uk	62.93	99.88	40	Timewarp	www.timewarp.co.uk	62.82	99.37	40	Versus.NET	www.versus.net	30.54	99.88
41	East Midlands Network (EMNET)	www.emnet.co.uk	62.82	99.37	41	Versus.NET	www.versus.net			41	Versus.NET	www.versus.net	6.61	87.40

Web host performance tests

You've entrusted your beloved Web site to a Web host. How well are they treating it? Does it download quickly and reliably, or struggle down the wire? In conjunction with Zeus Technologies, we put 85 Web hosting companies to the test.

Everything's bigger and better this month. More hosts tested, more movement in the rankings and faster throughput. VBCnet has rocketed 21 places to take the top spot, moving the previous holder, Virtua Internet, to number two. Virtua's performance didn't drop compared to last month's – it's simply been overtaken by an exceptional performance from VBCnet.

Frontier Internet has also done well, climbing from 32nd position to 9th, but the biggest mover of all this month is Sonnet Internet, rising 31 positions from 56th position to 25th.

There are a few falls in the ranks too. Preste On-line has lost 19 places, and Scotland Online and Netcetera have both lost 23 places.

Throughput results are given in kilobytes per second and most regular modems rarely manage to get above five kilobytes per second. Only extremely fast connections through SDN and cable can take advantage of the high throughput figures the top hosts manage.

How the tests work

We've based the rankings on transfer speed – how fast pages can be downloaded from the host server on to our test machines. One test machine is in the UK, the other is in the US. The second figure in the table shows the availability of the host server. Our test system tries to contact the host every 15 minutes, 24 hours a day. The availability figure tells you how often it gets through.

The tests ran over the period 1-23 June 1999. For more details on how the tests are carried out, plus a look at how the current tests are going, visit www.webperf.net.

More about the company behind the Web host tests



The Internet Magazine Web host tests are carried out by Zeus Technology, which provides Web hosting companies and ISPs with high performance, easy to use, feature-rich Web server software.

Zeus Technology has crafted the fastest and most scalable Web server software in the world, providing excellent reliability to its customers. Zeus has developed close working relationships with the industry leading hardware vendors such as HP, SGI, Compaq and IBM and holds the world performance record in conjunction with HP.

Designed for large-scale e-commerce solutions, the company's products contain the strongest levels of security available, and because of its European location, are free from US export restrictions. Zeus Technology and Internet Magazine are committed to delivering the best Web host service test in the UK. For more details, see www.zeustechology.com.

pick a provider

The most up to date information is vital when you're choosing from the hundreds of Internet service providers, and you'll find no better guide than the next six pages of our Pick a Provider section. From free ISPs through to leased line providers, you'll find them all here...

BBC returns to the ISP fold

The BBC (www.bbc.co.uk)

is set to get back into the provider game within the next month with the launch of a new free ISP. Freebeeb will be a strategic alliance between Beeb Worldwide (part of the BBC's commercial arm) and Scottish Telecom (owners of Demon).

The telco will provide the technology and infrastructure behind Freebeeb, while Beeb will be responsible for content. Licence fees are not being used to support this new venture.

The broadcaster's former effort (the BBC Networking Club) was a solo effort and disappeared in 1996.



because 't was making too much money. How times change.

"Research for the second quarter of this year reveals that 84 per cent of those households haven't bothered to get a free ISP provider," says Rupert Miles, director of Beeb. This is the market Freebeeb will be targeting.

www.freebeeb.net

Sharing the wealth on the Web

The battle for subscribers took an interesting turn this month with the launch of two new free ISPs that let their customers make or give away money.

Themutual.net lets you become a shareholder in its business by issuing you with some of its 2.1 billion units that can be swapped for shares. Punters could make money if the company is sold or floated.

At the other end of the financial spectrum is Angels. The new ISP, backed by a number of UK charities, will donate all of its profits to help support the charities.

www.themutual.co.uk
www.angels.org.uk

News in brief

Which? Online has created a code of practice for online traders. Which? Web Trader aims to encourage the highest possible standards and ensure consumers are treated fairly.

www.which.net

X-Stream has announced a deal with Carlton to provide film, games and food content from its popular portfolio of sites, such as Popcorn, Jamba and Simply Food.

www.x-stream.co.uk

Direct Connection has launched a new service offering Web design and hosting at budget prices. Choose space, bandwidth, tools and plug-ins to suit you - from £30 + VAT per month.

www.dircon.net

AOL is testing a search engine that will list results from its own content and the rest of the Web.

www.aol.co.uk

Net Direct Online is offering installation software on its site, so new customers won't need to send off for a CD.

www.instant.ndo.com

Compuserve, the content provider focused on business users, has announced a partnership with tabloid commerce magazine, *BusinessAge*.

www.compuserve.co.uk

New ISPs this month

Microsoft has joined the free market by launching MSN FreeWeb. The new service is powered by BT Click. Existing MSN customers will be able to use the service without losing their email addresses.

www.msn.co.uk

Dee has followed suit by setting up its free ISP, DellNet, which has Europe-wide coverage and is also powered by BT.

www.dellnet.co.uk

The third of the big players to transform itself into a free ISP is Sky - already one of the top 20 visited sites in the UK. SkyNow will also offer 40 per cent off all calls to the new ISP as well as standard BT calls. It offers an enormous 25Mb of free Web space.

www.skynow.co.uk



Also transforming itself into a free ISP is Biotech, the company behind the excellent PostMaster (www.postmaster.co.uk) and SchoolMaster (www.schoolmaster.co.uk)

email services. This new service, known as GlobalNomad, will give you 'frequent surfer points' for redemption at the school of their choice.

www.globalnomad.net

Freezone is another new entrant into the market. This ISP offers domain name registration at knock-down prices. All you pay is £19.99 + VAT, and then £29.99 + VAT for maintenance. www.freezone.co.uk

If you've got any ISP news or want to be included in our listings or ISP tests, email us at providers@internet.emap.com

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- Unlimited e-mail names: anyone@yourbusiness.co.uk
- Commercial grade website hosting.
- Fast setup.



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- Website hosting
- Website design
- Multiple e-mail
- Network connection
- Secure internet trading facilities
- Internet name registration

Interactive Web Ltd, Interactive House,
17 Dale Street, Lalmington Spa, Warwickshire
CV32 5HH



The most comprehensive listing of UK Internet service providers

Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Online Content Providers (you have to pay for content)						
AOL	0800 2 9 234	query@aol.com	www.aol.co.uk	7.45-10.30 Mon-Fri 10.00-16.00 Sat	£1.49	Aut
CompuServe	0990 000 200	customerservice@compuserve.co.uk	www.compuserve.co.uk	8.00-Midnight	from £6.50	CompuServe
LineOne	0345 002 000	ukweb@microsoft-contact.co.uk	www.uk.msn.com	24 hours a day	from £4.95	UJNET
MSN	0345 002 000	ukweb@microsoft-contact.co.uk	www.uk.msn.com	24 hours a day	from £4.95	UJNET
Which? On-line	06451 830 240	Support@which.net	www.which.net	24 hours a day	£14.75	NTL internet
Free Internet services (all you pay is the cost of the phone calls)						
BT Click	0800 7 43 333	sales@btclick.com	www.btclick.com	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Wireless
BT LineOne	0995 302 0100	enquiry@btone.net	www.btone.net	24 hours a day	free	BTnet
Calne & District	0800 092 100	sales@calne.uk.com	www.calne.uk.com	24 hours a day	none	able & Wireless
CallNet	0271 335 8300	info@calnet.uk.com	www.calnet.uk.com	24 hours a day	free	able & Wireless
Connect Free	0870 742 1111	info@connectfree.net	www.connectfree.net	24 hours a day	free	Terco/C & W
Contact Box	0870 404 4040	sales@contactbox.co.uk	www.contactbox.co.uk	9.15-17.00 Mon-Fri 12.15-16.00 Sat-Sun	free	Terco
Connect Box	01845 307 3636	none	www.connectbox.com	unknown	free	unknown
DejaNet	0701 129 3983	sales@dejanet.net	www.dejanet.net	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	free	unknown
Edisonet	0906 326 3366	support@edisonet.co.uk	www.edisonet.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	EasyNet
Free-Online	0870 706 5606	sales@free-online.net	www.free-online.net	7.00-23.00	free	free
Freecall	0137 775 5600	enquiry@freecall.co.uk	www.freecall.co.uk	8.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	free	Cable & Wireless
FreeNet	0878 433 338	info@freenet.co.uk	www.freenet.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	Webcom
FreeSpace	0990 500 049	info@freespace.net	www.freespace.net	24 hours a day	free	Energis
FreeUK	0900 900 0900	cservices@freeuk.net	www.freeuk.net	24 hours a day	free	Colt Internet
Freeweb	10ppn	support@freeweb.net	www.freeweb.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri 10.00-16.00 Sat	free	Mercury
Freewebzone	0870 744 111	info@freewebzone.co.uk	www.freewebzone.co.uk	9.00-21.00	free	Terco
GlobalNetwork	0906 360 0061	support@globalnetwork.co.uk	www.globalnetwork.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	Terco
GoFree	0906 690 1333	info@gofree.co.uk	www.gofree.co.uk	9.00-13.30 Mon-Fri	free	C & W
IC24	0906 7 444 222	support@ic24.net	www.ic24.net	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Wireless
Internet24	0800 052 0523	info@ic24.net	www.ic24.net	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 9.30-18.00 Sat-Sun	free	NTL internet
Internet24	01249 253 300	pharmacy@internet24.co.uk	www.internet24.net	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-18.00 Sat	free	IC24
Net24	0906 22 324	info@net24.kkomajash.com	www.net24.kkomajash.com	8.00-23.00	free	BTnet
Mitsubishi Online	0800 126 600	enquiry@mitsubishinet.net	www.mitsubishinet.net	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-18.00 Sat-Sun	free	UJNET
MSN Free Web	065 002 000	ukwp@msn.com	www.uk.msn.com	24 hours a day	free	Net Direct
Net Direct Online (NDO)	0800 731 3311	info@netdirect.net.uk	www.netdirect-online.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	BTnet
Screening Net	0800 376 5262	support@screening.net.uk	www.screening.net.uk	8.00-21.00	free	Screening Net
Sniff Out	01883 742 510	info@sniffout.co.uk	www.sniffout.net	24 hours a day	free	Cerbernet/C & W
Telco24 Internet	0800 542 0800	sales@telco24.net	www.telco24.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri	free	Cable & Internet
TescoNet	0845 605 0200	info@tesco.net	www.tesco.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	BTnet
The Mail	10ppn	info@themail.co.uk	www.themail.co.uk	10.00-18.00	free	News International
U.Genie	0906 302 0220	customer.care@u.genie.co.uk	www.u.genie.co.uk	8.30-18.00	free	BTnet
UK PeopleNet	702 10 4458	ukpeople@ukpeople.net	www.ukpeople.net	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Internet
UKONLINE	0845 133 4567	ukonline@ukonline.net	www.ukonline.net	24 hours a day	free	EasyNet
UKPeopleNet	0906 542 5200	info@ukpeople.net	www.ukpeople.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Sat	free	Cable & Internet
Virgin Net	0800 568 800	adviceline@virgin.net	www.virgin.net	24 hours a day	free	NTL internet
Wingsplay Internet	0845 757 7577	support@wingsplay.com	www.wingsplay.co.uk	12.00-18.00	free	BTnet
X Stream	0870 730 6466	info@x-stream.com	www.x-stream.com	24 hours a day	free	COLT internet

Key: LL - leased line ISDN - ISDN BDU - Business Dial-Up

How to choose a service provider

Where to start

Most service providers let you connect to the Net for the price of a local phone call, and this is an important factor in your choice. ISPs use systems run by companies such as BT, Energis and Mercury, where the phone number starts with 0345, 0645 or 0845.

Now look at how the providers charge for their services. There are free access providers, but most ISPs charge a flat fee for unlimited use of the Net. Other companies (such as AOL, MSN and CompuServe) have their own content and charge for the time you're online. They have options that give you three or five hours online. Once you exceed this figure you're charged at an hourly rate.

Out into the big wide Internet

If your ISP's Net connections are small and clogged, you can expect slow Web access, email that takes a long time to be delivered and many other problems. We run regular tests of service providers to find the fastest. See page 138 for this month's results.

Supporting the customer

Technical support is vital. You need help during the times you're on the Net. Don't be afraid to ask for the number before signing up. Give it a ring and ask them a tricky question.

Industry associations

There are a couple of Internet industry associations your ISP could join. The ISPA (Internet Service Providers Association) was set up to establish a code of practice for service providers. If you have a complaint about your service provider, you can take it to the ISPA (www.ispa.org.uk). Other service providers are members of the ISPC, a consortium of ISPs which combine their resources to provide an improved service (www.ispc.co.uk).



● Members of the ISPA are marked with an * while ISPC members have a † by their company name.



pick a provider

The most comprehensive listing of UK Internet service providers

Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Full UK coverage						
4theNET Internet	0870 787 9106	sales@4thenet.co.uk	www.4thenet.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£3.99	Arena
AAPI Internet	(0181) 427 1166	sales@aaapi.co.uk	www.aaapi.co.uk	10.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 14.00-18.00 Sat	£2.91	Netkonec
Abel Internet	(0131) 445 5555	info@abel.net.uk or advice@abel.net.uk	www.abel.net.uk	9.00-23.00	£8.81	Quza Raca
ACE Internet	(0705) 066 7423	sales@ace-internet.co.uk	www.ace-internet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.99	Netkonec
ACGNET	(0171) 377 9114	sales@acgnet.co.uk	www.acgnet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	N-dram
Adept	01843 850 444	sales@adept.co.uk	www.adept.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
AIC Internet	(01279) 306 677	enet@aic.co.uk	www.aic.co.uk	9.00-17.00	from £5	Entane
Airline Internet Resources	(01254) 583 834	sales@airline.co.uk	www.airline.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£15.27	JUNET Murphy Holmes
Albatross	01254 503 410	enquiries@albatross.co.uk	www.albatross.co.uk	9.00-10 Mon-Fri	£11.74	BTnet
Argo Interactive	(01243) 815 815	sales@argonet.co.uk	www.argonet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£10	JLN
Atlas Internet	(0171) 312 0400	info@atlas.as.net.uk	www.atlas.as.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	Atlas
Avante Internet	(01283) 545 000	webmaster@avante-uk.net	www.avante-uk.net	8.30-5.00 Mon-Fri	£8.99	NewNet
Aviators Network	(0700) 284 2867	info@aviators.net	www.aviators.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	GX Networks
Baynet	(01222) 256 401	enq@baynet.co.uk	www.baynet.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	NTL
Beacon Internet Services	(01749) 831 056	sales@thebeacon.co.uk	www.thebeacon.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£9.50	NetOnline
Blue Chip	(0113) 232 0801	support@bluechip.com	www.bluechip.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£15	Planet Online
Boots Free Internet	0870 740 3979	support@boots.com	www.boots.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	Highwayone
Boots Internet	0870 740 3979	support@boots.com	www.boots.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£12.75	Highwayone
BowleNet	800 28 28 2	info@bowlebowle.com	www.bowlebowle.com	24 hours a day	£11.75	Global Internet
Breathe Online	0800 280 3030	sales@breathe.co.uk	www.breathe.co.uk	24 hours a day	from £6.09	Scottish Telecom
BT Internet	(0800) 800 001	support@bt-internet.com	www.bt-internet.com	24 hours a day	£11.75	BTnet
Cable Internet	(0500) 500 100	sales@cablenet.co.uk	www.cablenet.co.uk	9.00-21.00	£11.75	Cable Internet
Cable Online	(0800) 052 2000	support@cableo.net	www.cableo.net	24 hours 5 days a week	£11.75	NTL Internet
Cable & Wireless Internet	(0800) 052 3013	sales@cwcom.net	www.cwcom.net	24 hours a day	£10	Cable & Wireless
CallNet	(01424) 830 900	info@cablenet.net	www.cablenet.net	24 hours a day	£9.95	VBCnet
Castle Net	0181 477 5623	sales@castle.net.uk	www.castle.net.uk	6.00-21.00 Mon-Fri	£8.81	Technocom
Charis Internet Services	(0121) 248 5800	duncan@charis.net	www.charis.net	8.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 8.00-12.00 Sat	£11.75	Wisper
Cheapnet	0990 168 160	info@cheapnet.co.uk	www.cheapnet.co.uk	9.00-18.30 Mon-Fri	£50 pa	Capethorn
Chertsey Communications	(01344) 640 594	info@chertsey.com	www.chertsey.co.uk	9.00-17.30	£11.75	Wisper VBCnet
City Netgate	(0117) 907 4000	info@netgates.co.uk	www.netgates.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
CLIX	(0181) 255 5151	sales@clix.co.uk	www.clix.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri 12.00-18.00 Sat	£7.34	BTnet / NS
ClarkeNet	(0800) 358 2828	info@clarke.net	www.clarke.net	24 hours a day	£11.63	Netkonec / NS
Cocoon Internet Services	(0171) 792 8945	admin@cocoon.co.uk	www.cocoon.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-19.00 Sat-Sun	£17.62	JUNET
Colloquium	(0500) 008 543	sales@colloquium.co.uk	www.colloquium.co.uk	24 hours a day	£14.10	JUNET
Computalyne	(01604) 231 437	sales@computalyne.co.uk	www.computalyne.co.uk	9.00-21.00	£11.75	Wisper
CPD Online	(0181) 446 7890	sales@cpd.co.uk	www.cpd.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Midram
Cyber Guide	01753 891 879	sales@cyber-guide.net	www.cyber-guide.co.uk	24 hours a day	£9.69	Cable Internet
Cyber Ware	01733 765 005	support@cyberware.co.uk	www.cyberware.co.uk	9.00-midnight Mon-Fri	£11.74	BTnet
CYBERPHILE Internet	(01543) 454 840	info@cyberphile.co.uk	www.cyberphile.co.uk	8.30-18.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Xata
CyberScope	(01253) 724 000	admin@cyberscope.net	www.cyberscope.net	10.00-18.00	£14.10	Cable Internet
Cygnal Internet Services	(0181) 880 4640	info@cygnet.co.uk	www.cygnet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	UUNET
DM Priest	0161 486 1110	support@dmpriest.com	www.dmpriest.com	24 hours callback	£8	Cable Internet
Dialang	(01252) 810 081	info@data.net.uk	www.data.net.uk	24 hours 5 days a week	£4.69	Planet Online
Demon	(0181) 371 1234	sales@demon.net	www.demon.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Demon
Direct Connection	(0800) 072 0000	sales@dc.net	www.dcon.net	9.00-21.00	£13.50	Direct Connection
Direct Net Access	(01232) 201 555	info@dn-a.net	www.dn-a.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£8.82	NTL Internet
DNA Internet Services	(01604) 670 717	support@dnais.co.uk	www.dnais.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-17.00 Sat	£9.99	Cable Internet
Easynet	(0171) 681 4444	sales@easynet.net	www.easynet.net	24 hours a day	£11.99	Easynet BTnet
Ecosse Telecommunications	(0800) 026 7092	netsales@ecosseel.co.uk	www.ecosseel.co.uk	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£9.99	Netkonec Ecosse
Enternet	(0500) 368 263	info@enternet.net	www.enternet.net	9.00-21.00	£10.58	Cable & Wireless
Enterprise	01624 677 666	sales@enterprise.net	www.enterprise.net	9.22-00 Mon-Fri 10.00-16.00 Sat Sun	£9.40	BTnet
EntWeb	(0800) 525 470	info@entweb.co.uk	www.entweb.co.uk	8.22-30 Mon-Fri 10.00-14.00 Sat Sun	£10	Entico
Farebase	(01322) 280 011	info@farebase.co.uk	www.farebase.net	7.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-15.00 Sat-Sun	£16.45	Easynet
Force 9	(0800) 073 2800	sales@force9.net	www.force9.net	7.00-midnight	£5.86	Force 9
Freedom to Surf	(0181) 881 2111	sales@freedom2surf.net	www.freedom2surf.net	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Freedom to Surf
Frontier Internet Services	(0171) 536 9090	info@ftech.net	www.ftech.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 12.00-18.00 Sat	£10.38 pa	IN5 Wisper
Gemsoft	(0114) 275 2070	sales@gemsoft.net	www.gemsoft.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Sat	£12.99	Nacamar Netkonec
Global Internet	(0870) 909 8043	info@global.net.uk	www.global.net.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	BTnet / GX Networks
Globewide Internet	(0161) 953 4018	info@globewide.com	www.globewide.com	10.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£10	BTnet / Wisper
GreenNet	(0171) 713 1941	support@gnp.org	www.gnp.org	10.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£15.86	JUNET
Hiway	(01635) 573 300	info@hiway.co.uk	www.hiway.co.uk	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£14.69	GX Networks / Wisper
IBM Global Services	(0990) 426 426	global.network@uk.ibm.com	www.ibm.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£17.62	IBM Global Network
Icon Web	(0800) 731 8419	sales@icon-web.com	www.icon-web.co.uk	10.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£9.40	Cable and Wireless
Ideal Internet Services	(01942) 522 333	support@idealnet.co.uk	www.idealnet.co.uk	24 hours callback	£9.50	Cable Internet
IMC Internet Services	(0115) 988 1880	imc@imc.co.uk	www.imc.co.uk	10.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	from £7.80	NS
Intensive Networks	(01672) 511 054	sales@intensive.net	www.intensive.net	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Intensive Web	(01926) 450 099	info@www.iw.net	www.www.iw.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£9.70	Cable & Wireless
Internalpha	(01703) 363 200	enquiry@internalpha.co.uk	www.internalpha.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Wisper
Intonet	(0181) 941 9195	info@intonet.co.uk	www.intonet.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Sat	£11.75	BTnet
Intenet	(0845) 606 2014	info@intenet.net.uk	www.intenet.net.uk	24 hours a day	£10	Inweb Networks
K Web	01273 763 500	info@k-web.co.uk	www.k-web.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.69	Planet Online
KeepNet	(01869) 276 000	info@keepnet.co.uk	www.keepnet.co.uk	none	£60 pa	Capethorn

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Sales:
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• Contactbox
www.contactbox.co.uk



pick a provider

The most comprehensive listing of UK Internet service providers

Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Full UK coverage						
KEMA	07000 790 290	sales@kema.co.uk	www.kema.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 1900-2100 Sat Sun	£11	Netkonect
Kingston Internet	0161 821 600	info@kingston-internet.net	www.kingston-internet.net	8.30-midnight	£9.75	Planet Online
LinkNet	0161 828 716 423	linknet@linknet.co.uk	www.linknet.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-13.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Internet
LibertyNet	0800 018 2001	customer@libertynet.co.uk	www.libertynet.co.uk	8.30-10.00 Mon-Fri 12.00-18.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable net
London Internet	0171 838 1199	info@london-int.net	www.london-int.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£11.75	Intensive Networks
London Web Communications	0800 026 8306	internet@londonweb.net	www.londonweb.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Sat pager Sun	£14.68	Netkonect
Madhouse Net	0800 074 8283	info@madhouse.net.uk.com	www.madhouse.net.uk.com	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	NACAMAR
Mailbox Internet	0171 371 8558	info@mailbox.co.uk	www.mailbox.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	from £5.88	Netkonect
Merci Internet	01827 69166	sales@merc.a.net	www.merc.a.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.50	Netkonect
Microcom Internet	01933 313 093	sales@microcom.net	www.microcom.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£10	Cable & Wireless
Ministry of Sound	0800 909 8200	Sales@ministryofsound.net	www.ministryofsound.net	8.30-21.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-18.00 Sat Sun	£11.75	Global Internet
Mistral Internet	0800 328 7253	info@mistral-internet.co.uk	www.mistral-internet.co.uk	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri 10.00-16.00 Sat	£11.75	Netkonect
Moonlight	01276 856 868	sales@moonlight.co.uk	www.moonlight.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£14.95	Cable Internet
Nationwide ISP	0800 731 6860	Sales@nationwideisp.co.uk	www.nationwideisp.co.uk	24 hours a day	£7.50	BTnet
Net Online	07000 638 665	sales@net.co.uk	www.net.co.uk	9.00-20.00	£11.75	Globe One Qua
NetDirect Internet	0800 731 3211	info@netdirect.net.uk	www.netdirect.net.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-18.00 Sat Sun	from £8.99	BTnet BusinessNet
Netkonect	0171 345 7777	info@netkonect.net	www.netkonect.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-13.00 Sat	£11.75	Netkonect
NetMatters	01502 580 000	info@netmatters.co.uk	www.netmatters.co.uk	9.00-20.00	£11.75	Wisper, VBCNet
Newbury Internet	01635 569 123	sales.enq@newbury.net	www.newbury.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Intensive Networks
NewNet	07000 639 638	Sales@newnet.co.uk	www.newnet.co.uk home	9.00-22.30	£9.74	Wisper VBCNet
Midram	0800 496 2903	sales@midram.net	www.midram.net	9.00-23.00	from £5	Midram
On-Line Internet	01963 32904	info@on-line.com	www.on-line.com	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-13.00 Sat Sun	£11.75	BTnet
ONET	0800 980 6698	sales@onet.co.uk	www.onet.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-16.00 Sat	£17.50 for life	GX Networks
Onyx	10345 715 715	sales@onyxnet.co.uk	www.onyxnet.co.uk	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Onyx
Orchid Information Systems	01763 244 007	internet@orchid.net.co.uk	www.orchidinfo.co.uk	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cerbernet
Paradise Internet	01256 414 863	sales@pins.co.uk	www.pins.co.uk	11.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£9.40	Netkonect
Paston Chase	01603 502 061	sales@paston.co.uk	www.paston.co.uk	9.00-17.00	£10.58	Wisper
Pavillion Internet	01275 607 072	info@pavillion.co.uk	www.pavillion.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12.55	EasyNet, BTnet
Pinnacle Internet	01903 524 999	sales@pinnacle.co.uk	www.pinnacle.co.uk	8.30-19.00 Mon-Fri	£14.75	JUNET
Pipemedia Online	01455 828 218	sales@pipemedia.net	www.pipemedia.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	VBCNet
PortHill.com	0171 923 9465	info@porthill.net	www.porthill.net	9.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	GX Networks
Portland Communications	0702 10 1200	sales@portand.co.uk	www.portand.co.uk	0.00-22.00	from £3.99	Cable Internet
Power Internet	01908 605 188	info@power.net.co.uk	www.power.net.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Portland Comms
Prestel Online	0990 223 300	enquiry@netset.es.prestel.co.uk	www.prestel.co.uk	24 hours a day	£10.56	Socish Telecom
Primes	01908 643 597	info@pha.pr.mrex.co.uk	www.pha.pr.co.uk	8.00-21.00	£11.75	On-Net Netkonect
Pro Net Internet Services	0181 200 3565	sales@pro-net.co.uk	www.pro-net.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-16.00 Sat	£16.33 pa	Cable Internet
ProWeb	0500 636 343	Sales@proweb.net	www.proweb.co.uk	24 hours a day	from £10	Diamond Cable Comms
PurpleNet	0800 718 4535	Sales@purple.net.co.uk	www.purplenet.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-16.00 Sat-Sun	£5.99	Wisper
Python Internet	0870 606 025	Sales@python.co.uk	www.python.co.uk	9.30-19.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	NS
RapidNet	0151 722 0304	Sales@rapid.net.uk	www.rapid.net.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£9.40	Cable Internet
Research Machines	01235 826 868	sales@rm.com	www.rm.com	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri	£12.50	GX Networks, Wisper
RDM Group	01237 426 110	info@rdm.com	www.rdm.com	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	JUNET, GX Networks
RSC Internets	01244 585 113	info@rsc.co.uk	www.rsc.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£9.99	BTnet
SAQ Internet	0870 737 7700	sales@sagnet.co.uk	www.sagnet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12.50	COLT
Scotland Online	0843 027 2027	admin@sco.co.uk	www.scoand.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Scottish Telecom
Searey Data Services	01703 892 351	info@searey.com	www.searey.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 9.11 Sat-7 Sun	£11	Interweb
SIMNET	0800 0745 547	SA.SIMNET@SIMNET.co.uk	www.simnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-12.00 Sat	£9.40	Telinc Internet Services
SoftNet	01675 464 488	pos.master@softnet.co.uk	www.softnet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£9.99	Planet Online
Sonnet Internet	0171 891 2000	enq@sonnetne.co.uk	www.sonnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-18.00 Sat	£14.69	BusinessNet
StrongNet	01271 321 145	sos@sonsi.net	www.sos.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Sat	£1.75	Intensive Networks
SurfAid	01703 866 006	info@strongnet.co.uk	www.strongnet.co.uk	24 hours a day	from £4.50	Interweb
SurfLink	0870 907 1000	info@surfaid.org	www.surfaid.org	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 10-6 Sat-Sun	£8.81	GX Networks
Swift Internet	0181 903 2777	sa.85@swift.net	www.swift.net	24 hours a day	£9.99	BTnet
The Network Group	0845 606 0210	info@network-group.com	www.network-group.com	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 10-5 Sat-Sun	from £86.95 pa	Cable & Wireless
Tia Net	01293 616 000	info@tia.net	www.tia.net	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£15	JUNET
TriggerNet	0118 973 6060	support@triggers.net	www.triggers.net	24 hours a day	£6.93	Cable Internet
TimeWarp Internet	0161 950 8855	sa.85@newarp.co.uk	www.timewarp.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable Internet
TRINET	01539 1731000	dmacdonald@trinet.mv.com	www.trinet.mv.com	9.00-20.30 Mon-Fri	£8.25	Cable Internet / Wisper
U-Net	01925 484 444	sales@u-net.net	www.u-net.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£12	BTnet
UniNet Internet Services	0800 783 7499	internet@ukip.co.uk	www.ukip.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	Planet Online, NACAMAR
UUNET (Pipex Dial)	0500 567 000	sa.85@uk.net	www.uk.net	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-18.00 Sat	£14.98	JUNET
Valliant Internet Services	0191 523 8544	sa.85@vantis.co.uk	www.vantis.co.uk	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£9.99	Cable & Wireless
Virtual Internet	0800 980 9107	info@vcom.co.uk	www.vcom.co.uk	24 hours a day	£14.95	Netcom
Wave Rider Internet	0121 603 3888	info@waverider.net.uk	www.waverider.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12	VBCNet
WebPro	0181 886 2424	info@webpro.net.uk	www.webpro.net.uk	24 hours a day	£14.69	Planet Online
Webscape	01963 370 800	webmaster@webscape.co.uk	www.webscape.org	24 hours a day	£141 pa	GX Networks
WinNET Communic	0181 930 6688	sa.es@win.net	www.win.net	9.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£17.63	ULINET
Winenet Amiga	01925 496 482	sales@winenet.co.uk	www.winenet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-13.00 Sat	£14.25	U-Net

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7 Steps to Get Online Right Now! (for Windows 95/98 and Internet Explorer 4)
1. From the Windows desktop, double-click 'My Computer' then 'Dial-Up Networking'.
2. Click 'Make New Connection'. Type in the name 'FreeWebAccess' then click 'Next'.
3. Type '845' as the area code and '3811545' as the telephone number. Select 'United Kingdom (44)' as the country code and 'code'. Click 'Finish'.
4. Back in the 'Dial-Up Networking' window, double-click the new 'FreeWebAccess' item.
5. In the 'Connect To' window that appears, type 'guest' as the username and 'guest' as the password then click 'Connect'.
6. From the Windows desktop, double-click 'Internet Explorer' to start your browser software. Type "<http://www.freewebaccess.co.uk>" into the browser address blank and press the 'Enter' key. (If the title bar above the browser says 'Working Offline', click 'Refresh').
7. Once connected to the 'FreeWebAccess' home page, follow the instructions carefully.

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Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Full UK coverage						
WISS	01481 602 405	enq@wiss.co.uk	www.wiss.co.uk	9.00-22.00	£11.75	Celtic Internet
Woden Network Systems	0121 242 4500	sales@woden.com	www.woden.com	8.30-22.30 Mon-Fri	£10	VBC Net
Worldwide Web Services	01784 898 800	info@webs.co.uk	www.webs.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£17.62	U-Net
Zetnet Services	01992 691 367	info@zetnet.co.uk	www.zetnet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£7.50	BTnet/Wisper
Zoo Internet	01803 961 7000	enquiry@zoo.co.uk	www.zoo.co.uk	9.00-21.00	£6.99*	Zoo Internet
Zulu Internet	01494 758 895	sales@zulu.co.uk	www.zulu.co.uk	8.00-21.00	From £5	Nildram
East						
AngliaNet	01473 211 922	tony@anglanet.co.uk	www.anglanet.co.uk	8.00-21.00 Mon-Sat 11.00-19.00 Sun	£11.75	Wisper
KeConnect Networks	01203 411 222	Sales@keconnect.co.uk	www.keconnect.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 09.00-14.00 Sat-Sun	£11.75	Wisper
Net Solutions Europe	01284 3301	Sales@nse.co.uk	www.nse.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Technocom
RTT Internet Services	01903 666 554	info@rtt-internet.co.uk	www.rtt-internet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£9.60	RTTnet
London and South East						
Alpha-Access	0171 222 1222	info@alpha-access.co.uk	www.alpha-access.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Antex Internet	01992 671 722	info@antex.co.uk	www.antex.co.uk	8.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£11.61	BTnet
Bogomil	0181 960 3050	info@bogomil.co.uk	www.bogomil.co.uk	10.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 10.17.00 Sat-Sun	£12	BTnet
Exonet	01268 453 000	sales@exonet.co.uk	www.exonet.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£15.75	Nilram
Exin Systems	0181 296 5577	info@exin.net	www.exin.net	10.00-midnight Mon-Fri	£14.10	VBCom
FlexNet	0171 222 1222	info@flex.net	www.flex.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Netcom
Inter-Computer Technology	0171 486 9601	sales@inctech.com	www.inctech.com	24 hours a day	£12.63	Wisper
INTERAct Internet	0171 770 0679	sales@interact.net.uk	www.interact.net.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	Cable Internet
Kai Internet	01992 476 666	sales@kai-internet.co.uk	www.kai-internet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	No Internet
Knitel	01234 271 900	sales@knitel.co.uk	www.knitel.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£12.93	Cabletel
KDD Euro Web	0800 010 510	sales@kew.net	www.kew.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£17.62	Internet KDD
KENTnet Internet	01234 844 800	sales@kentnet.co.uk	www.kentnet.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri 09.00-10.00 Sat-Sun	£11.75	BTnet
Metanet	01284 821 752	info@metanet.com	www.metanet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	BTnet
Metronet	0800 074 1883	info@metronet.co.uk	www.metronet.co.uk	10.30-19.00 Mon-Sat	£12.68	Qua
Moanet	020 7 824 248	info@moanet.co.uk	www.moanet.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	BTnet
Netmania	01234 233 090	info@netmania.co.uk	www.netmania.co.uk	11.00-13.00 Mon-Fri	£42.00pa	Wisper
Soft-Print Ltd	081 888 200	softprint@softprint.co.uk	www.softprint.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£14.10	BTnet
Thomas Klein	01603 761 527	info@tk.co.uk	www.tk.co.uk	9.00-21.00	£9.49	Cable Internet
UKNET	0171 241 533	sales@uknet.com	www.uknet.com	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£10.49	GX Networks
YousNet	01234 7 8901	info@yousnet.co.uk	www.yousnet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-15.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Internet
Websurfer	0181 354 8000	info@websurfer.co.uk	www.websurfer.co.uk	10.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Midlands						
Brunel Internet	01922 459890	sales@brunel.co.uk	www.brunel.co.uk	9.00-18.00	£11.75	BTnet
Discovery	01203 364 400	invent@discover.co.uk	www.discover.co.uk	8.30-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Technocom
ENNET	0151 956 8260	enq@ennet.co.uk	www.ennet.co.uk	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£7.82	Wisper
Fenetra	0151 389 298	sa@fenetra.co.uk	www.fenetra.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£9.40	BTnet
Footbar Internet	0161 233 0033	sales@footbar.co.uk	www.footbar.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Netconnect
GiltNet	0161 222 99	sales@giltnet.co.uk	www.giltnet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	BTnet
Griffin Internet	01332 606 160	info@griffin.net.uk	www.griffin.net.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£14.69	GX Networks
Netcafe	01262 712 21	sales@netcafe.co.uk	www.netcafe.co.uk	9.00-22.00	£10.49pa	Wisper
Newgate Communications	0121 327 6633	marketing@newgate.co.uk	www.newgate.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£12.50	Easynet
Northants Computer Centre	01604 622 539	tony@nccnet.co.uk	www.nccnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00	£11.75	Cable Internet
Prima.net	0115 913 3372	sales@prima.net	www.prima.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.74	Cable Internet
Skynet Internet Services	03604 452 245	Sales@skynet.co.uk	www.skynet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-17.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Internet
Stayfree Internet	0161 291 0909	sales@stayfree.co.uk	www.stayfree.co.uk	24 hours a day	£9.99	Wisper
The Internet in Nottingham	0115 956 2222	info@innotts.co.uk	www.innotts.co.uk	10.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£14.69	Wisper
WebConnect	0115 956 2222	sales@webconnect.co.uk	www.webconnect.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable & Wireless
WyoNet	0115 956 2222	sales@wyonet.co.uk	www.wyonet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable & Wireless
North East						
Flintnet Services	01244 4424	sales@flintnet.co.uk	www.flintnet.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Engage
Legend Internet	01274 743 500	sales@legend.co.uk	www.legend.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Sat	£14.69	Sprint
Netbytes Internet	0113 294 4273	info@netbytes.yorkshire.com	www.netbytes.yorkshire.com	10.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Sprint
North West						
Chester Internet	01244 341 418	ken@chesterinternet.co.uk	www.chesterinternet.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	GX Networks
Cyberbase	0151 222 4244	sales@cyberbase.co.uk	www.cyberbase.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable Internet
Freewave Internet	0141 433 111	sales@freewave.co.uk	www.freewave.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12.95	Wisper
Kempton Internet	01992 722 550	info@kempton.co.uk	www.kempton.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£11.75	Impressive Networks
Mersnet	0151 475 4751	info@mersnet.co.uk	www.mersnet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	Wisper
Talknet	0151 244 1745	sales@talknet.co.uk	www.talknet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
The Internet in Lancashire	01253 222 333	info@lancashire-internet.co.uk	www.lancashire-internet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Impressive Networks
Scotland						
Ednet	0141 334 3333	sales@ednet.co.uk	www.ednet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Fernnet Training	0141 566 6377	sales@fernnet.co.uk	www.fernnet.co.uk	8.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
TwoNet	0141 334 3333	sales@twonet.co.uk	www.twonet.co.uk	7.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Scotnet/TwoNet
South Central						
Andover On-line	01264 334 822	info@andover.co.uk	www.andover.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-17.30 Sat	£12	GX Networks
Athene Internet	01329 828 000	dyer@athene.co.uk	www.athene.net.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon-Sat	£13.50	Wisper
Bournemouth Net	01202 292 900	sales@bournemouth-net.co.uk	www.bournemouth-net.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Sat	£10	Qua and PS
CintraNet	01703 571 000	accounts@cintranet.co.uk	www.cintranet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable Internet
DTS Technologies	01202 659 499	sales@dtstechnologies.co.uk	www.dts.co.uk	9.00-17.00	£4.99	BTnet
Portsmouth Net	01705 420 366	sales@portsmouth-net.co.uk	www.portsmouth-net.co.uk	9.00-17.30	£6	Qua

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Southampton Net	01202 432444	sales@southampton-net.co.uk	www.southampton-net.co.uk	9.00-17.30	£1	4.25
Total Connectivity Providers						
Wales						
Cardiff Internet Services	01222 231344	eng@cardiffinet.co.uk	www.cardiffinet.co.uk	8.30-19.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-18.00 Sat	£1.5	NTL Internet
Connect Wales Internet	01992 420330	sales@connect-wales.co.uk	www.connect-wales.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£1.75	CymruNet
Cyberstop Internet Services	01792 465050	internet@cyberstop.co.uk	www.cyberstop.co.uk	24 hours a day	£0.95	NTL Internet
Telecall	0117 941414	sales@telecall.co.uk	www.telecall.co.uk	10.15-17.30 Mon-Fri	£1.75	BTnet / Wisper
Vapiro	0117 941414	sales@vapiro.co.uk	www.vapiro.co.uk	9.00-17.30	£1.5	Intensive Networks
Business Providers						
1st Solution Internet	01256 382720	sales@1stsolution.co.uk	www.1stsolution.co.uk	9.00-18.30 Mon-Fri	BDU	ISDN / LL
ACE	01670 528204	nfo@ace.co.uk	www.ace.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	ISDN	LL
Apple Centre Warrington	01925 444499	sales@applecentre.com	www.applecentre.com	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU	ISDN / LL
BTnet	03451 585110	sales@bt.net	www.bt.net	24 hours a day	LL	BTnet
BusinessNet	0171 3909933	sales@business.net.uk	www.business.net.uk	24 hours a day	BDU	ISDN / LL
Cerbernet	0171 3608000	sales@cerbernet.net	www.cerbernet.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri by pager Sat-Sun	LL	BusinessNet
COLT	0171 3909099	nfo@colt.net	www.colt.net	24 hours a day	LL	Wisper
Community Internet	01865 856000	info@community.net.uk	www.community.net.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	BDU	SDN / LL
Croxsons New Media	01494 777999	info@cnm-uk.net	www.cnm-uk.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	LL	Wisper
Data Link Internet	015221 681100	sales@dlinternet.co.uk	www.dlinternet.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	LL	BTnet
Dot Internet	013721 436000	sales@dot.co.uk	www.dot.co.uk	8.30-18.30 Mon-Fri	BDU	ISDN / LL
DIALnet Connect	08001 881881	sales@alnet.com	www.dialnet.com	24 hours a day	BDU	ISDN / LL
ElectricMail	01223 501333	nfo@electricmail.co.uk	www.electricmail.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	ISDN	LL
Epinet	01242 821000	nfo@epinet.co.uk	www.epinet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	BDU	ISDN / LL
Forfront Web Services	01237 357474	nfo@forfront.net	www.forfront.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	BDU	ISDN / LL
GX Networks	0181 9571250	sales@gxnet.co.uk	www.gxnet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	LL	BTnet
Hotlinks Internet	0181 8836316	webmaster@hotlinks.co.uk	www.hotlinks.co.uk	9.30-midnight Mon-Fri	BDU	ISDN
I-Way Solutions	0171 7345734	sales@i-way.net.uk	www.i-way.net.uk	9.00-18.30 Mon-Fri	BDU	ISDN / LL
ICM NetServ	0800 614581	sales@icm-netserv.net	www.icm-netserv.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU	ISDN / LL
Impact Web Publishing	01628 522099	sales@impawp.com	www.impawp.com	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	LL	BTnet
Internet Central	01270 611000	sales@internet-central.co.uk	www.internet-central.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	BDU	ISDN / LL
InterNet for Business	01224 233370	nfo@ibn.co.uk	www.ibn.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	BDU	ISDN / LL
Internet Network Services	08001 467638	nfo@ins.net	www.ins.net	24 hours a day	ISDN	LL
Internet Solutions for Business	01203 633177	sales@is4b.net	www.business-solutions.net	24 hours a day	BDU	ISDN / LL
Internet UK	0845 0700006	www.internetuk.co.uk	www.internetuk.co.uk	7.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	ISDN	LL
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If you've come across any bizarre Web stories, email them to smiley@internet.emap.com. Any we use win a mystery prize

The News of the Strange

Monkeying around online

OK, so on the Internet nobody knows if you're a dog, apart from your ISP, who's getting suspicious of receiving payment in Bonios. But if you're a monkey, your anonymity might have been blown to bits by this site, which manages to index just



about every famous monkey in the world. Smiley's only worry is that Mr Monkey does seem... well... a little obsessed. www.evl.uic.edu/caylor/MONKEY/famousmonkeys.html

Going, going, get outta here

Online auctions are wonderful things – you can buy almost anything here – from a Van Gogh painting (\$500,000) to an office building in Florida (\$1.2 million). Or that's what Smiley thought. But a 13 year old boy called Andrew Tyler has beaten you to it. Unfortunately, he didn't have the \$3.1 million that



Scary Baby Conspiracy site. If you thought your neighbour's baby was ugly, boy are you in for a shock. Be warned though – some of these babies are dangerous convicted criminals – the site's not for those of a weak constitution. www.wdl.net/DANS/scary/index.html



The Smiley guide to Internet users

No 16: Currantbun.com

Age: Universal – you don't have to be able to read it – there's plenty of pictures.

Appearance: A dedicated follower of football fashion, from the clothes to the cars. Changes haircut as often as political allegiance, and is often caught holding a bacon sarnie in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other.

Hangouts: Nudge nudge, know what I mean – "hang...outs" – geddit?

Known associates:

Melinda Messenger and other blonde bombshells, Tony Blair, Rupert Murdoch and lots of people called Gaz, Baz or Daz.

Likes: White vans, mobile phones and a good barney (these three things often merge together on the South Circular at



5pm). Also, saying "luvly jubbly", "nice one" and "she's a stunner Baz".

Hates: Rich and posh people (apart from the Queen, gawd bless her), Liberals and Tories (apart from Maggie Thatcher, gawd bless her).

In other words: Yer average white Anglo-Saxon, beer-swilling, lady-loving, Sun-reading designer bloke.

Philosophy: Get 'em out for the lads.

Latest fad: The Internet, especially those porno sites, eh?

Most likely to say: "Didn't mean to put topless pictures of you on my Web page."

Most unlikely to say: "Let's clean up the Web – there's far too many pictures of naked ladies."

More from: www.currantbun.com

Bookmarks of the rich and famous...

Net celebs open up their browsers and share their bookmarks with *Internet Magazine* readers. This month it's the turn of newsreader and TV quiz master...

Martyn Lewis CBE



After 32 years of presenting national TV news, Martyn left the BBC in April 1999 to form Global Intercasting Ltd. He now advises organisations on how to combine live satellite TV with Internet technology to improve internal communications. He's also the founder of YouthNet, whose award-winning site offers help to young people. It won best non-commercial Web site in the 1997 New Media Age Internet Awards and has received praise from Tony Blair.

So what's so great about the Internet, Martyn?

Being able to transmit information to an almost unlimited audience is an incredible tool. I'm looking forward to hugely enhanced video capacity in a few years.

And the downside?

Safety for young people is a concern. I'd like to see parents teaching their children about the dangers of the Net.

So what are your favourite Web sites?

BBC News

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>



The BBC has done a remarkable job here. The breadth and depth of the news site is astounding – I like the relevant links to previous stories on a particular topic.

PA News Centre

www.pa.press.net

For breaking news, I'd go to the PA News Centre first.

Amazon

www.amazon.co.uk



I'm a regular visitor to Amazon. It can't be beaten for finding books quickly, by either title or author.

theSITE

www.thesite.org.uk

It's a fantastic resource – it helps to advise young people on crucial choices that will shape their future.



Internet Movie Database

<http://uk.imdb.com>

A brilliant update on the latest film news – the stars, the latest releases and movies in production.

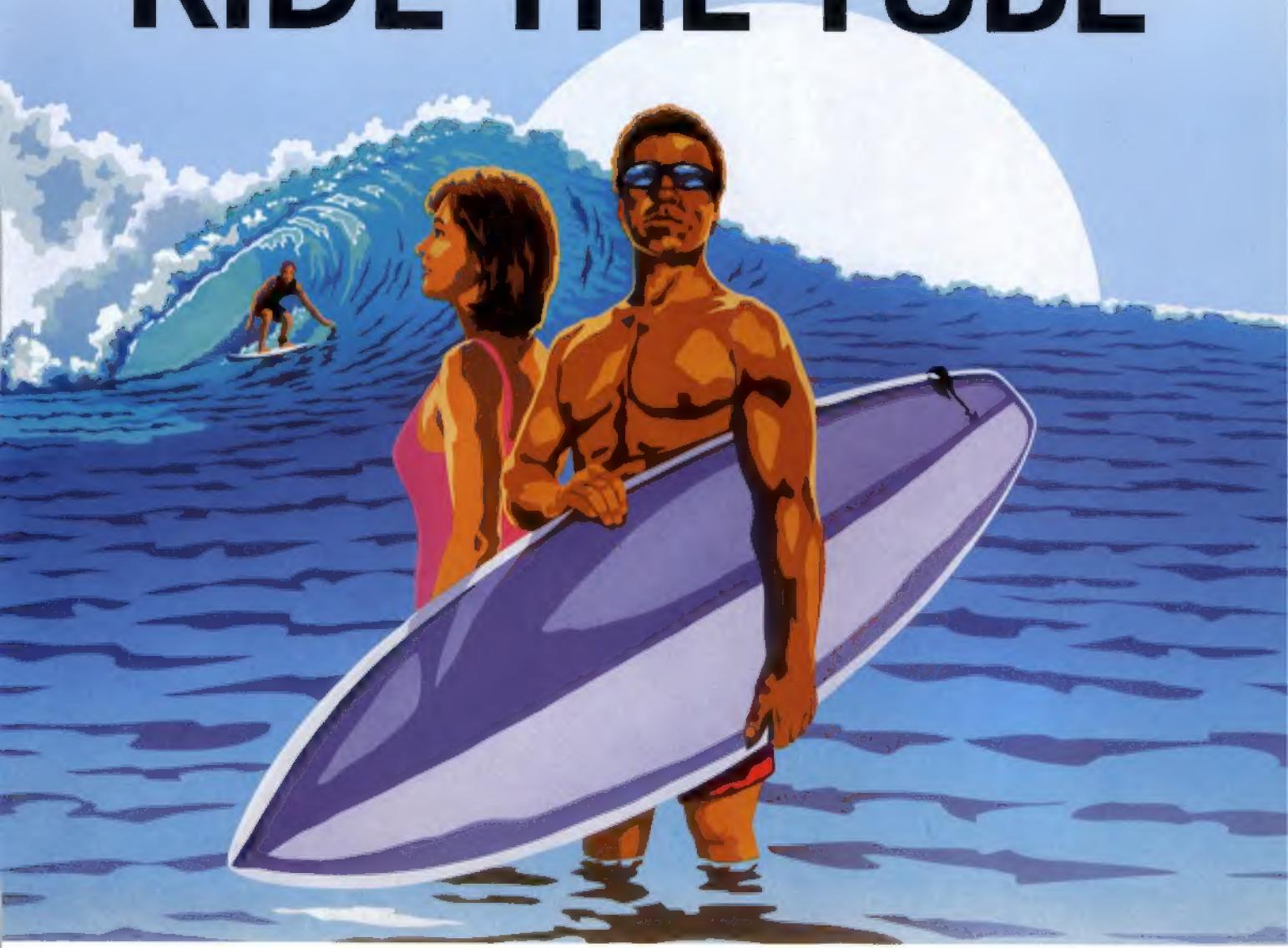


Want to know more about Martyn Lewis? Visit theSITE at www.thesite.org.uk

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